

# **american socialist quarterly**

## **SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT**

**FULL STENOGRAPHIC REPORT**

**of the**

**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES**

**Adopted at the National Convention  
of the Socialist Party in Detroit,  
June 3, 1934**

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## STENOGRAPHIC REPORT

of the Debate on the

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

*Adopted at the Detroit Convention, June 3, 1934, by a roll call vote of 10,822 for the declaration, 6512 against, 99 delegates voting for the declaration, 47 against. At the request of a sufficient number of delegates after the convention, the declaration is being submitted to the membership of the Socialist Party for a referendum vote. In order that the general membership may be informed on the discussion which took place at the convention, the National Executive Committee authorized the American Socialist Quarterly to issue a special supplement carrying the entire debate. Appended to the discussion are the statements for and against the declaration which will accompany the referendum.*



# Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party is the party of the workers, regardless of race, color, creed. In mill and mine, shop and farm, office and school, the workers can assert their united power, and through the Socialist Party establish a cooperative commonwealth forever free from human exploitation and class rule.

If the workers delay and drift, they will prolong the period of their enslavement to a decadent capitalism. This uncreative, wasteful and brutally oppressive social system takes jobs away and turns millions of would-be producers into the streets with no assurance that ever again they may become employed—financiers, for their own selfish gain, control markets and prices and autocratically regulate the extension or withdrawal of credit. Those who utilize the profit motive for arbitrary advantage, restrict the workers' standard of living save where labor has aggressively organized and struggled energetically for its rights—and even then deny to the working class the abundance which the modern productive process is technically capable of bestowing upon those willing to labor for the common good. Capitalism invades the peace of farming areas with the all-pervasive danger of insecurity and in many regions with bitter destitution. Throughout the land it attacks the American home and brands countless children with the pinch of want.

The privileged minority who benefit from exploitation of the multitude are not content with owning the mechanism of production and distribution, which perpetuates their property power; they control the press, radio, and motion picture; they starve and poison the educational system; they dominate our courts, our municipalities, our state legislative assemblies, and our national government; for the extension of their economic domain they expose to the appalling menace of new imperialist wars the innocent youth in our own and

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other countries, on whom they will lay the ruthless clutch of conscription and send to fight those wars. To confuse the voting masses and retain their authority, they maintain great political parties whose appeal fluctuates between frank reaction and fictitious liberalism, neither of which offers to the workers any substantial or enduring program for the acquisition of their birthright.

Only those who labor with hand and brain in their concerted might, can overthrow this monstrous system and replace it with a Socialist order. Whenever they will, they can transfer to the people the ownership of industry, land, finance, and natural resources including water power, and operate these possessions of the Socialist commonwealth for the material and cultural enrichment of all—beginning with the large scale industries of a public character such as banking, insurance, mining, transportation, communication, and the trustified industries, and extending the process rapidly to the point where rent, interest, and profit are abolished.

The socialization of industry as Socialists conceive it, however, means more than simple government ownership—it involves the opposite of irresponsible bureaucracy, and includes democratic administration through the elected and responsible representatives of the workers in the respective industries and of the workers as a whole.

The Socialist Party advocates the establishment of a system of co-operative and publicly owned and managed warehouses, markets and credits, to promote direct dealing between farmers and city consumers at the cost of the service in their mutual interests, thus reducing the cost of living, assuring farmers a just compensation for their labor, and enabling them to escape from the twin curses of tenantry and mortgaged serfdom.

Workers of town and country must be strongly organized on economic as well as on political lines. The ceaseless struggle of the labor unions and farm organizations, and the constructive work of bona fide cooperative societies, are necessary, not only for the immediate defense and betterment



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of the condition of the producing class, but also to equip producers with the understanding and self-discipline required for the efficient administration of the industries of which they are to win control.

It is the duty of every Socialist wage worker to be a loyal and active member of the union in his industry or trade, and to strive for the strengthening and solidifying of the trade union movement. It is the duty and privilege of the Socialist press to aid the unions in their struggles for better wages, increased leisure, and better conditions of employment.

The Socialist Party, while standing for the interests of the American people, recognizes that the well-being of any one nation is inextricably interwoven with that of every other. To divisive capitalist nationalism it opposes international workers' solidarity; to the Socialist party of other countries it extends full support in their struggles, uniting with them in the common effort to build a world-wide federation of Socialist republics.

The Socialist Party is opposed to militarism, imperialism, and war. It purposes to eradicate the perpetual economic warfare of capitalism the fruit of which is international conflict. War cannot be tolerated by Socialists, or preparedness for war. They will unitedly seek to develop trustworthy working class instruments for the peaceable settlement of international disputes and conflicts. They will seek to eliminate military training from schools, colleges and camps. They will oppose military reviews, displays and expenditures, whether for direct war preparedness or for militaristic propaganda, both in wartime and in peacetime. They will loyally support, in the tragic event of war, any of their comrades who for anti-war activities or refusal to perform war service, come into conflict with public opinion or the law. Moreover, recognizing the suicidal nature of modern combat and the incalculable train of wars' consequences which rest most heavily upon the working class, they will refuse collectively to sanction or support any international war; they will, on the contrary, by agitation and opposition do their best

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not to be broken up by the war, but to break up the war. They will meet war and the detailed plans for war already mapped out by the war-making arms of the government, by massed war resistance, organized so far as practicable in a general strike of labor unions and professional groups in a united effort to make the waging of war a practical impossibility and to convert the capitalist war crisis into a victory for Socialism.

In its struggle for a new society, the Socialist Party seeks to attain its objectives by peaceful and orderly means. Recognizing the increasing resort by a crumbling capitalist order to Fascism to preserve its integrity and dominance, the Socialist Party intends not to be deceived by Fascist propaganda nor overwhelmed by Fascist force. It will do all in its power to fight Fascism of every kind all the time and everywhere in the world, until Fascism is dead. It will rely, nevertheless, on the organization of a disciplined labor movement. Its methods may include a recourse to a general strike which will not merely serve as a defense against Fascist counter-revolution but will carry the revolutionary struggle into the camp of the enemy.

The Socialist Party proclaims anew its faith in economic and political democracy, but it unhesitatingly applies itself to the task of replacing the bogus democracy of capitalist parliamentarianism by a genuine workers' democracy. Capitalism is doomed. If it can be superseded by majority vote, the Socialist Party will rejoice. If the crisis comes through the denial of majority rights after the electorate has given us a mandate we shall not hesitate to crush by our labor solidarity the reckless forces of reaction and to consolidate the Socialist state. If the capitalist system should collapse in a general chaos and confusion, which cannot permit of orderly procedure, the Socialist Party, whether or not in such a case it is a majority, will not shrink from the responsibility of organizing and maintaining a government under the workers' rule. True democracy is a worthy means to progress; but true democracy must be created by the workers of the world.



# Debate on Declaration of Principles

June 3, 1934

Chairman Vladeck: I recognize Comrade Waldman of New York.

Comrade Waldman: Comrade Chairman and Comrades: Under the Constitution, the Declaration of Principles and the Platform become the official declarations of the party. This Declaration of Principles, in my judgment, cannot be supported by those who believe in Socialism.

I should like to begin by impressing upon the convention the important fact that that declaration cannot be adopted in a hurry or in an impatient mood. While there are many paragraphs and many sentiments expressed there which are accepted socialist doctrine and practice, there are some propositions included in this declaration to which a political party dedicated to lawful and peaceful struggle cannot commit itself. (Boos.)

I propose to invite all the boos there are, and I will also be glad to defend any delegate of this convention if he is indicted as a result of this declaration. I tell you, comrades, do not permit the fact that this is the third day of the session and your nerves are a little bit frayed to permit you to divorce yourselves from your sound judgment. I invite you, first, to look at paragraph 4 on page 2 of the declaration, and I invite you to look at the paragraph that deals with war.

Now, I know full well that this paragraph is capable of all kinds of interpretations, and let me read to you one or two sentences from it: "They will meet war and the detailed plans for war already mapped out by the war-making arms of the government by massed war resistance."

Comrades, what does that phrase mean? "Massed war

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resistance" is one of the clauses which constituted the basis of indictment of thousands of people during the last war. "Massed war resistance" is one of those provocative phrases which is capable of all kinds of construction. What does a political party dedicated to lawful and peaceful struggle mean when it declares itself dedicated to the use of massed war resistance if it does not mean extra-legal means?

I do not know what it does mean. If it means legal means, let us say so, but why use the equivocal, indefinite statement which has been construed and will be construed in the future as an illegal attempt at using force in time of war.

Let me go to another part of the declaration: I am not now, in five minutes, going to attempt to formulate for you, particularly in the mood in which you appear to be, theoretical differences of opinion on the basis of sound socialist programs and philosophy. There is much to be said here that is unsound, that is contradictory, that does not stand the test of analysis and reason. It is bombastic, it is unreal, it is unconvincing, and will not bring a single additional convert to the Socialist Party.

Let me go to the last page of this declaration. "If the capitalist system should collapse in a general chaos and confusion which cannot permit of orderly procedure, the Socialist Party, whether or not in such case it is a majority, will not shrink from the responsibility of organizing and maintaining a government under the workers' rule."

What does that mean? Comrades, I have seen conventions whose delegates were influenced by the gallery. I say to you that those who applaud these sentiments in a convention at this time will be the first ones to run to the enemy in time of trouble. I have seen, in my twenty-two years of socialist service, that whenever we permitted any such doctrine to go into our declarations and platforms either because of impatient feelings toward existing conditions or because of provocative people who desire the Socialist Party to commit itself to the wrong proposition so that it may lead to division and to ruin, this was the result.

For myself, comrades, it is inconceivable to me that I can

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remain a Social Democrat and become bound by this declaration, and I warn you, comrades, that you in the gallery in this convention may exert your influence by applause and by booing, but you have not built a party yet in this city to give you the credit and the title to boo and to jeer socialists who devoted their lives to the service of the Socialist Party.

I make my appeal to you, comrades. If we have to adjourn without a declaration I would a thousand times rather do that than commit the Socialist Party to an anarchistic, illegal, and communistic doctrine. (Booing and applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: I shall ask our guests, out of fairness, not to interfere with the proceedings of the convention.

The Chair now recognizes Comrade Sharts, of Ohio.

Comrade Hendin: I am sure, Comrade Chairman, that you will have a general discussion here which will be of no avail, and I believe it will be impossible to offer substantial amendments. I therefore propose that this resolution be taken up paragraph by paragraph. If there is no objection to a certain paragraph it should be declared as passed, so that we can proceed to the following paragraph.

Chairman Vladeck: I think it is a sensible procedure.

Comrade Sharts: I will wait until the paragraph I wish to speak on comes up.

Comrade Solomon: A point of procedure. I should like to suggest to the Chair and to the convention this point: I think it is high time that we stop trying to straddle and compromise on basic propositions before this convention. I am not satisfied to make this document acceptable to those who are basically opposed to it. So far as I am concerned I want this thing to pass decisively or not at all.

The other night Comrade Chairman, we voted on the international program. I think this convention will react to what I am saying, particularly as to what shall be done to this declaration of principles. The other night we straddled on the question of international relations. I hoped that one side or the other would carry that proposition one way or the other, so that there would be no more straddling.

I do not hesitate, Comrade Chairman, to tell this conven-



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tion and the country at large where I belong. I do not want to straddle in this platform. I do not want an emasculation of this platform. I want a socialist platform, and I understand what I mean by a socialist platform. I am opposed to the attempt to go down the line.

This means a decision that I have to make after twenty-five years of activity. I want to make that decision, and I do not want to let anybody stand between me and that decision. Comrades, I call upon you to ask that we discuss the platform as a platform, and vote for it or turn it down. Let the chips fall where they may.

I move, Comrade Chairman, that we continue as we began, with a general discussion of the platform, and if it is at all possible, we will vote for this thing or vote against it. It is impossible to amend it so as to make it satisfactory for one side or the other. Each side knows exactly what it wants, and the proponents of the platform are honest enough to let you know where they stand. Let the opponents of it be honest enough to let you know where they stand. I know where I stand.

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair has only one thing in mind, and that is the best way in which it is possible to serve this convention.

Comrade Solomon: That is not the best way to serve the Socialist Party of America.

Chairman Vladeck: A general discussion is not feasible because nearly every delegate has a very definite opinion on the platform. If you wish to have a general discussion, and if that be agreeable to you, I would suggest that we call upon four delegates who are in favor of this platform and four who are opposed, after which time we will be ready for a vote. Is that agreeable to you? (Yes.)

Comrade Panken: I rise to move the suspension of the rules in order to make a motion that those who are to speak for and those who are to speak against shall have at least ten minutes each.

Comrade Lee: On the motion. I think that even on this

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question it seems to be quite possible to lose our heads. I think to say, beforehand, that if we are going to have a general discussion of the platform, then that discussion shall be limited to the four that the Chair may recognize out of those who desire to speak for it and the four who desire to speak against it, is out of order. I think it is for this body, if we proceed with a general discussion, to go on discussing it until this house feels that it has had enough discussion to come to an intelligent decision and then, by an orderly vote, orderly voted on for the previous question, to decide that it will close the discussion.

Chairman Vladeck: That is out of order, because the rules provide for only two hours discussion on the platform, and over an hour has been consumed. There is a motion for the suspension of the rules to spend the time in general discussion and to extend the time of the speakers from five to ten minutes. A two-thirds vote is required.

Comrade Panken: I call for a show of hands.

. . . The motion was voted upon and lost . . .

Chairman Vladeck: I now recognize Comrade Sharts, of Ohio.

Comrade Sharts: Comrades: As this may be the last time that I shall speak to the Socialist Party of America I beg of you to listen with some patience to what I have to say. We are meeting today in a capitalist-ridden hall in Detroit, in a capitalist-ridden city, in a capitalist-ridden state, in the capitalist-ridden land known as the United States of America. You will observe that we are meeting here with no policemen present. You will observe that there is no agent of the government on the platform to stop this meeting at the first criticism of the government. You will notice that we are here enjoying absolute freedom of discussion without the slightest danger that we will be flung into prison for what we say against the prevailing government and the prevailing capitalist system. We can, today, discuss with perfect freedom the tearing down of this government and the tearing down of this system.

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If, as a result of this discussion of ours, we see fit to send out a message to the people of the United States inviting them to join us in tearing down the government and in tearing down the capitalist system, all the facilities of publicity will be open to us. We have every right in this bourgeois republic, in this bogus democracy which is so contemptuously referred to in this platform, to do everything we can to gather the majority in our favor, and then to exercise our rights as citizens.

I say that if this is a capitalist-ridden community, state, and country, it is rather handsome on the part of our rulers that they give us this privilege.

I call your attention to the fact that on the bottom of the second page, which Comrade Waldman, in his remarks, overlooked, there is a somewhat clearly-disguised repetition of the language of the majority report on international relations. Comrade Thomas, I believe, suggested that we were playing with fire in advocating the substitution of the bourgeois democracy by a dictatorship of the proletariat, and suggested that we use the words "proletarian democracy" instead.

If I understand the meaning of this language, and certainly the meaning of those who put it in, the idea fundamentally is that if we enjoy all the privileges of free speech, free press, free assemblage as we are having here sufficiently for us to acquire political power, well, in our turn, we will break down the freedom of speech, press, and assemblage; we will have an armed workers' dictatorship that will deprive the defeated factions of their privilege of voicing their wrongs in meeting and appealing to the public.

I say to you, if that is the plan, we are not even good sportsmen. I say that we are dirty. I say that we have not even the gallantry to accept the fair play that is offered us by this bourgeois ruling class when we undertake it in that way.

Comrades, I say this is probably—no, I won't say it is probably the last time I shall speak to the Socialist Party of America until I have gone home and studied it over carefully. It seems that I must mention something of myself. I do not like to do it.



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I happen to be born an American. I am not saying it boastfully, but it has meant something to me. It has meant that there has been something grand and beautiful in America far beyond the capitalist excrescence that has grown upon it. In my time I served under the flag of the United States, and it did not seem to be a very bad flag to serve under. My father served before me in the army of the United States in the Civil War, under the national colors. He did not think it was such a bad flag to serve under. My great-grandfather served with Washington in the armies of the Revolution. I say to you that if you place in this platform your statement that, regardless of the circumstances under which the United States of America may be engaged in war while it remains a capitalist republic so-called, then I shall be compelled to follow that line of disloyalty. I, as an American, loving America above all nations of the earth, hereby register my declaration that I will stand by America when I see fit, and I will not yield to those red internationalists who have written into this platform the right to say that I must attack my country under all circumstances that they select. (Booing and applause.)

Comrade Thomas: A question of procedure.

We all feel very, very strongly on this matter, but it helps nothing at all to have visitors here who interrupt, when a man has only five minutes, with either booing or cheering. I think it does not make for an atmosphere of proper deliberation, to say nothing of proper courtesy. I think that those who do it are likely to further other ends than they think.

I request, in the name of this convention, courtesy in the hearing of serious arguments on a weighty issue.

Chairman Vladeck: The Chairman is in full agreement with the sentiments of Comrade Thomas, and is ready at this time to state that unless the guests cease disturbing our proceedings we will have to finish our sessions without their much-desired presence.

Comrades, there is nothing before the house except the discussion. I now recognize Comrade Devere Allen.

Comrade Allen: Comrade Chairman and Comrades: I am

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not going to boo my comrades, either Sharts or Waldman. I am going to answer their arguments. I should like to say, first of all, that, whether it is a case of war or a case of a fascist coup d'etat, the question of whether or not our activities are to be considered lawful will be decided not by ourselves, but by the opposition.

We, who have lived through war know perfectly well what we may expect, and if we need to be assured on the point, all we are required to do is to examine certain documents which may be purchased today from the Superintendent of Documents at Washington; for example, the Industrial Mobilization Plan of the War Department and other procedures that have been outlined for a war emergency.

If you have not read them, and if you are not acquainted with the detailed program to be employed on the outbreak of a war by the war-makers of this country, then of course you may consider that there will be opportunities for free expression in that time of crisis, but if you are familiar with them you will see without any attempt or need of persuasion that we can do nothing about the legality of the question whatsoever.

The objection has been raised, and should properly be considered, of why do we now, when we are obviously weak and quite frankly do not consider ourselves sufficiently strong to prevent a war by the procedure that has been suggested, raise it in this convention? The answer, again, it seems to me, is clear. We are in the process of building a united and extensive movement, and if we are to build soundly with a procedure for a time of emergency we can not afford to delay the organization of that movement around central principles of indispensable importance.

We say we wish to oppose to the war machine massed war resistance. That phrase means a little more than the opposition of an organization against war. It means, as has been stated, time and time again, in labor councils, among labor organizations abroad containing many millions of members, the calling out, in the case of a war or a fascist emer-

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gency, of all of the available labor movement at our disposal and the disposition of our labor resources in strategic ways.

It has been said, again, that this procedure will not attract converts to the Socialist Party. My friends, I believe that there are some people in this convention more qualified to speak on this point than I, but I do not need to be egocentric when I say that I doubt if there are very many. I have been at the center of the organized peace movement in this country ever since the World War, and I doubt if any of you is quite so much of a joiner as I have been in that regard. I can say to you from experience as chairman of the committees working in the organized peace societies to this very end, that there are people all over America today listening for this word to come forth from this convention before they will enter into the socialist movement and put their shoulders to the wheel. (Applause.)

I should like to pass lightly over the insinuation that those who are advocating this measure will be the first to run. I know that that is not the case. Again, I am not interested in personalities, but I would like to remind our critics that at least the speaker did not run during the World War, and if it had not been for a slight defect of eyesight, would have been in Leavenworth penitentiary on the ground that he could not, in the name of Socialism, support a war.

It is also said that it will be provocative. Of course, to those who do not know the provocative plans already in store for us that may seem to be true, but we can not decide this issue. Every bit of machinery that can be employed to break the spirit of a war resistance movement is ready. Many of our names are on file in card catalogs in Washington. We cannot evade this responsibility. We must organize and mobilize on our own behalf in the name of international peace.

We can reduce violence and public disturbance, not by treating this matter weakly and indecisively, but only by resolution and preparation. I have never disguised the fact that I consider myself a pacifist and am proud to bear the name, but as a pacifist I do not believe we encourage the



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repression of violence and the spread of lawfulness by treating lightly the responsibility to present to the forces of disruption an organized movement so potent that it can not be broken.

It has been said again, finally, that this move would commit our party definitely to illegality in time of war. That is exactly what is in the minds of some of those who drew this proposition. If ever again a capitalist government of America masses into an imperialist war, to remain legal through that conflict would be to brand forever the socialist movement with the mark of shame.

Chairman Vladeck: Comrade Kirkpatrick will now speak against the resolution.

Comrade Kirkpatrick: First of all I have the advantage against a possible successful accusation of being white-livered about this matter. I think I have been mobbed during war as often as anybody else in the audience, and at the same time I have not been side-stepping on the socialist position concerning war and militarism. Even during the war I made three lecture trips, speaking chiefly on war and militarism.

In one city in the West, Portland, Oregon, the comrades had already paid about \$200 for the municipal auditorium, and two days before I arrived the local capitalist paper jumped upon me personally, announcing that I was an unfit person to be permitted to come inside the city limits. I have had my speeches taken down a good many times by governors' stenographers; I have been ruled out of one of the leading cities of the East for four consecutive years because of my experience in speaking on war. The Rockefeller paper at Pueblo, California, said, in a six-inch news item on the front page, that the telephone pole was the right size and the right height for the proper treatment of me.

Now, with this understanding I think you will understand that I am not white-livered about this matter. I did speak in one state after the governor had telegraphed me that he would not defend me in any town in the state.

The point that I want to make is this. This paragraph is extraordinarily dangerous. It is easy to get a lot of applause by speaking with a high-pitched, enormous force, and with

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exciting phrases, especially when an audience is excited. That is easy. Most folk can get away with it. But after the convention is over and you go back home and get into the business of the actual propaganda, you will find the situation is very different from what obtains here today.

You may feel comparatively safe here and now. I judge, for example, that Comrade Thomas feels relatively safe. He has already told me that he meant to speak in defense of this paragraph. I have already told him that he, of course, will be personally safe, clothed about, as he has been, by the comrades with very extraordinary distinction. He is, and he is as yet, too distinguished to be hanged. Mayors, or bloodthirsty sheriffs with pistols in their belts, are not likely to strike Comrade Thomas in the face and knock his teeth out. He is dead safe for some years to come, just as some men who teach economics in universities are safe in being radical.

For example, the late and very distinguished and brave Dr. Giddings, of Columbia, is a case in point. The trustees would have been delighted to turn him out, but he was too big to be put out because of his standing in the academic world. The smaller men have pretty uniformly gotten it in the neck.

I have no such distinction as Comrade Thomas to protect me. I have dared considerable without any such distinction, as many have who are here today. I am not saying that boastfully, but believe me, comrades, while you may have studied the psychology of mobs in books and so on, I tell you that after having been mobbed five times and nearly mobbed twenty-five times, a mob looks different when you get a front view, and they are figuring on getting your blood.

It seems to me that we here in this convention should be rather too cunning, cunning in the sense of being intelligent, to put swords and ropes and blackjacks in the hands of our enemies. You vote favorably on this paragraph and it will cause a grin and a loud laugh of glee in many a Chamber of Commerce in this country. Many a ruffian sheriff will be delighted.

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I mentioned Comrade Thomas a moment ago, and I am not saying this with any malice at all; for many of the things that Comrade Thomas does, and for much that he is, I am inclined to take off my hat. But remember, Comrade Thomas, as I told him, would be perfectly safe in the Imperial Valley, California whereas I would not, and John Packard would not, and neither will the humble socialists of the valley. We shall be lucky if we escape with our skins.

We ought to be too shrewd to supply Chambers of Commerce and their cunning servitors, who are watching us, and who will be supplied with all that we do here with this ammunition, so that they may study it to find hooks from our platform that they can get us on, or drag us into jail before courts. We should be too shrewd to supply the capitalist press with swords for use in advance of the fight, too shrewd to supply the capitalist class now in almost absolute control of the radio, with swords with which we are to be run through, more or less figuratively speaking; too shrewd, particularly, to arm ruffian judges who smack their lips when they have a document of this sort before them, when the humbler men and women of the party are before them on charges involving things of that sort or that can be interpreted as having relation to things of this sort.

Surely, comrades, think twice. Either strike this out or refer it back to the committee. This is more critical, more full of dynamite, than some of you seem to imagine. Beware.

. . . Comrade Arthur McDowell took the Chair . . .

Comrade Hapgood: Comrades, I rise at this time to support the resolution of the committee. In doing that I want to say that I support it, not because I am completely satisfied with it. There are many ways in which I think it should be amended, not to the right, but to the left. (Applause.) For lack of time, however, this afternoon, I am merely going to answer the arguments presented by those who have spoken from the right against these resolutions.

One of those arguments does not need to be taken seriously. All those things which Comrade Sharts stated were not the opinion, in my estimation, of most of those who were



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opposing this resolution, because he has frankly told you that in the event of a world war he is on the side of the capitalist government. In a pamphlet which he wrote and circulated throughout the country he makes this statement: "A common-sense instinct warns the ordinary man that until capitalism shall have been exterminated from the earth the battle flags can not be furled. Only the wildest Utopianism or worse can preach pacifism and war resisters' leagues under such war-breeding conditions."

He is in favor of this government if there is a war.

The others, I am glad to say—Comrades Waldman and Kirkpatrick—are not. Their arguments must be taken seriously, therefore. They make the statement that this document of the Platform Committee is bombastic; it will lead to mass arrests in time of war, it will antagonize people against us. May I say that in 1917 our party passed a resolution against war, and that resolution has in it this sentence: "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 oppression."

I do not know who wrote that into the platform, but I understand that it was Morris Hillquit; yet people, followers of Morris Hillquit, are coming to us this afternoon and telling us that this platform is too radical for the Socialist Party.

In 1917 most of those people who seriously opposed war went to jail, even though they did not have in the platform this statement about mass resistance. Comrade Waldman tells us that this platform will not bring one new recruit to the Socialist Party. In other words, the workers in this country are opposed to mass resistance. They proved that in Toledo and in all the other places! (Applause.)

The working class in this country is waiting, at the present time, for a political party which will not quibble about these phrases, which will come out strongly, preparing the people of this country to resist when the capitalist class seeks, by war, either international or civil, in a fascist movement, to break the organizations of the working class. They would have us believe that the only ones who are in favor of

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this platform are intellectuals, pacifists, college professors and people of that kind. I want to say that at the present time I am organizing two unions—incidentally, one A. F. of L. and one non-A. F. of L.—and in those organizations the workers that I come in contact with say that their main objection to the Socialist Party is not that it is too radical, but that it is not radical enough.

There are those who will say, here, "Why don't these people join the Communist Party?" They do not join the Communist Party because they have various other differences of opinion with them, such as the rule of the Third International, and questions of that kind. But on such statements as this, in this platform, of mass resistance in the event of war, these workers are with us, and if we do not quibble, if we put that into our platform, I venture to say that we will get many new recruits into the Socialist Party.

There is another statement that Comrade Kirkpatrick objected to, and that is the last part, where we say that, in the event of a complete collapse of the system, we will not shrink from our duty in taking control of the state. I want to ask them what do they want the Socialist Party to do when capitalism collapses? Do they want us to stand idly by and let a fascist group take it over? Do they want the communists to take it over? Or do they want the Socialist Party to take it over?

If they want the Socialist Party to take over this system in case of a complete collapse, it is about time that we begin to educate our membership, to educate the workers in this country that that is their duty when capitalism collapses. We are not helping our party by pussy-footing; we are not gaining new recruits by adopting an attitude that we want them in the party and, in the event of a crisis, we will then tell them what they are supposed to do. If a war comes or if capitalism collapses, it will then be too late to educate our members.

The last war proved that once the declaration of war was made by our government the time had passed when we could make new recruits for our program. The time to start

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organizing is before a crisis, and not afterwards, and so I urge you to support the resolution that is now before the house. (Applause.)

Comrade Lee: The comrade who preceded me very rightly said that in time of war it is not a time when we can educate people whom we have not already educated beforehand. In the main that is true. And I want to apply that to some general remarks about this Declaration of Principles, so-called.

If, after this session is over and we have a sleep, we will all of us read it through and compare it with the declaration of principles that our party and other socialist parties have adopted in the past, we will awake to the fact that what is proposed here is not a declaration of principles. A declaration of principles ought to be an illuminating and educative document that would state, in good order, the fundamental principles of Socialism. This document fails to do that.

In Milwaukee two years ago there was introduced a proposed draft of a declaration of principles. I had my little share in proposing it. It was proposed to the convention by the largest local and the largest state organization in the United States. During the convention that was lost in the shuffle, as now, until the last afternoon of the convention. It was then referred to the National Executive Committee to consider, to amend if it seemed advisable, and to submit to the party for rejection or adoption. Two years have passed, and the National Executive Committee did not take it out of the files.

We had a preliminary Agenda Committee of this convention existing for some weeks, and it did what? It prepared a declaration of principles. This which comes to us has been prepared since eleven o'clock last night, to the best of my information, and it is inside information, and was brought, even to members of the Platform Committee, only pretty late today. It is not in that way that declarations of principles ought to be adopted, and I agree with Comrade Solomon that we would do far better to reject this as a whole and stand by the declaration of principles which we did adopt

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in Milwaukee, though I do not consider it altogether adequate and satisfactory. Our principles are not things to be made over according to the number of delegates that happen to be in the last session of a convention.

Now, coming to the specific things in this, which I consider a bad, or no, declaration of principles. I want to take up a couple of points, but first I want to say this, in view of what Comrade Hapgood has said: I served with Morris Hillquit in the committee in 1917, and can bear testimony that in the committee and before the convention Morris Hillquit called attention, as Louis Waldman has done today, to the uselessness and the danger of certain phrases such as "massed war resistance", and the experience of the following couple of years abundantly proved his wisdom. Men who insisted on having those words in the resolution came running to Morris Hillquit to defend them and to help them to explain that those words did not mean mass war resistance when they were brought before the courts. So much for that.

I want now to emphasize what perhaps has already been said: Heroism does not consist in going on Sunday, the third day of March, and slapping a policeman in the face. It may be very romantic, and there are some people on Union Square in New York who think that that is being revolutionary. That is what you are doing if you adopt this resolution. But you are doing it at the expense of men and women who are not in this hall, who have given you no mandate on the question; at the expense of those very men and women, obscure Jimmy Higginses whom Comrade Hapgood and I expect to come into the party. They are the ones, and with a few exceptions they, the obscure ones including some who were on record as opposing the phrasing of that declaration, were the men who were prosecuted and who went to jail.

To adopt this will not do one bit toward assuring that you will have massed war resistance or a general strike or anything of the sort. You do not get that sort of thing by adopting a resolution in a convention. But to adopt this today will, in the first place, be to put a conclusive argument in the hands of every District Attorney in the states that



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have criminal syndicalism laws, criminal anarchist laws, or whatever they call them, and even in other states, to send to prison men who will have to stand the gaff, but who have not voted on this today. I do not see why we should, for no purpose, invite that danger.

The second proposition is this: Nothing is easier than to say under the circumstances, that when a war breaks out we will call a general strike. Yes, we can call a general strike. We will have no general strike unless, before the war breaks out, we have millions upon millions of working men, not the illogical students and college professors, but wage-earners in the shops and factories, not following a resolution we have adopted today, but following the socialist conscience that will be in them if, instead of mouthing revolutionary phrases, we teach the principles of our scientific international revolutionary Socialism as we have been doing it in the past. We have to get the socialists before we can afford to use phrases like that. (Applause.)

Comrade Krzycki: Comrades, you recall that the committee reporting this proposition assured us that in their haste no doubt some of the i's were not dotted and some of the t's were not crossed, and that they would go over the paragraphs and correct what language was to be corrected.

In principle, comrades, I look upon this document at a time like this, when the crisis in America is spreading and no one knows what the situation in this country will be at the end of this year, as the Socialist Party reaffirming its stand in St. Louis in 1917. (Applause.)

I was fortunate in being present in St. Louis in 1917. We had a division there. There, too, were those who appeared before us and, in similar language, warned us of the consequences that were to follow and later walked out on us and went over to the other side, while others stood firm, while others stood back of him who, in the main, drew up that document known as the St. Louis Platform—one with keen intellect, who was unafraid to say the things that some of his most dear friends are afraid to say at the present time. We looked up to Morris Hillquit in that convention for lead-

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ership, for advice, and he gave it to us, and we have not lost anything as a result of following his leadership.

I disagree with the voice that came from California a moment ago suggesting that the outstanding leaders of the party are perfectly safe. I want to remind them of the fact that the outstanding leader of the party in those days, Eugene V. Debs, was not safe. He went to jail.

Comrades, I was associated with Norman Thomas in the socialist and labor activities for several years. He, indeed, is the outstanding personality in the socialist movement in America, and if I am to judge him under this document by the way he stood and faced a gas bomb the other night I will say that he will follow Eugene V. Debs to jail rather than shrink.

Comrade Solomon: I ask for the privilege of speaking against the platform. I want you to understand before I say anything that I never felt less able to make a speech, in the conventional sense of that word than I do tonight. This occasion means too much to you and to me for me to exploit it with a burst of oratory. A lot of people regard me as an effective speech-maker, and I very much fear that they are going to be disappointed in me on this occasion.

I want to talk to you, not as an orator but as one who has spent twenty-five years on the firing line of the socialist movement. I want you to understand my point of view and I want you to understand the points of view of those who agree with me. I want to tell you also that in trying to enable you to understand my point of view there are some things that I shall not be able to say even to you this afternoon, in public—some things that I can say to you only in private. I can not say them in a public speech.

Reference has been made to those who have had the courage and those who have been afraid and those who stood up in the face of danger. There are several of us here who stood up in the face of danger. I was on the platform throughout the entire war, and when I was on the platform I was not speaking in socialist strongholds. The Socialist Party of the City of New York sent me to every dangerous part of the City

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of New York throughout the entire period of the war, and during that period I spoke on those street corners where it was impossible to make a speech except under a heavy police guard. I was taken to those corners under guard and I was taken away from those corners under guard. I was not speaking on the East Side, in the Bronx, in Harlem, where Jewish workers were wildly enthusiastic, but I was speaking to those people who have been referred to as those who are ready to offer mass resistance to war if war should come now, and I knew then the kind of mass resistance they were ready to offer, and I know now the kind of mass resistance they will be ready to offer. They are ready to offer mass resistance but the mass resistance will be to those who attempt to talk about the things that this platform seeks to commit the Socialist Party to, and I want to assure you it will be the most effective mass resistance you men have ever seen work in history.

Comrades, I know what it means to face a situation of this kind. I, too, have paid the price for my Socialism. I was one of several members elected to the legislature in the State of New York, and along with those several members I was ousted from the legislature of the State of New York because each and every one of us, unapologetically, unequivocally, frankly and whole-heartedly stood by the St. Louis declaration of the party. We were not afraid of the party's position, and I want to say to you now that reference was made by the preceding speaker to the effect that this resolution reaffirms the St. Louis declaration of the party. Whatever opinions I may have of the wisdom or unwisdom of the St. Louis declaration, I want to let you in on a secret, that Morris Hillquit had some doubts of his own as to the wisdom of that resolution.

Whatever doubts I may have as to the wisdom or unwisdom of that declaration I want to say to you that if it is your purpose to reaffirm the St. Louis declaration of the party, then reaffirm that declaration and do not ask us to adopt this thing.

Now, comrades, it would be a perfectly easy thing for

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any man to sit down and, with fancy rhetorical phrasing, write a declaration of principles. I think it would be hypocritical and equivocal to attempt to do anything of the kind, and that is why I take this position in this convention. There are a large number of comrades in this convention who know what they want, or who seem to know what they want, and I want to say to them that I just as definitely know what I want, and that is why I took the position I have taken in this convention.

If you want to come here and demonstrate that you can write rhetoric that is more appealing, more stirring, than the rhetoric that other people can write, then I want to confess to you that this resolution represents an achievement in that direction, but in the name of common sense why labor under the misapprehension that just because you come to the National Convention of a socialist party you have to pass a resolution on each and everything under the sun.

You have stated your position in the general declaration of principles adopted in Milwaukee in 1932. I do not want you to understand me as saying that I subscribe to that declaration of principles as being absolutely and completely satisfactory today, but if you do not do any better than you have done in this declaration of principles, why aren't you satisfied for the moment to rest on that earlier declaration of principles?

Comrades, in this declaration of principles you declare, by amendment from the floor, that we are absolutely and unequivocally opposed to war and we shall never vote for armaments, and in that declaration of principles you say something else to which I want to call your attention at this moment. I read from the last paragraph: "The immediate task of the working class is to organize for power to take for themselves the full social value of the fruits of their toil. Without that power which comes from organization the workers can do nothing."

That is exactly why I am opposed to this resolution. That summarizes and epitomizes the point of view that motivates me in addressing you on this occasion. Without that



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power the workers can do nothing. Do you think, after making this same statement, that by adopting this reckless resolution you will substitute power for lack of power? Why, certainly not.

I want to answer a series of questions that have been brought up in the course of the debate. It has been said, and I think that Comrade Powers Hapgood said it, that some people talk from the right. I am not speaking from the right in the sense that I am opposed to the left on this occasion. I am speaking from the right in the sense that right means the point of view. I do not speak from the point of view of Comrade Sharts. If I had just his point of view I do not think I would participate in this debate, although, frankly, I can conceive of occasions when the point of view expressed by Comrade Sharts would be very useful at socialist meetings.

We have been asked, "Are we afraid to adopt this resolution because it is too radical?" No, I am opposed to this resolution not because it is too radical but because it is too reckless. You have talked about ropes here. I refuse to vote for a resolution that seeks to formulate ropes of rhetoric, and I want to tell you, comrades, that ropes of rhetoric can be just as deadly as ropes of hemp, because more than one radical has been hanged with a rope of rhetoric.

Then, comrades, we have been asked by Comrade Hapgood what they want us to do, and the implication is, that if you don't adopt this, you can not do anything else. My answer to Comrade Hapgood is just this: I say to Comrade Hapgood, quoting from the Congressional Platform that we have adopted here today, Comrade Hapgood, I do not want you, and those who seem to share your opinions, to raise barriers in the way of a socialist movement in its objective in the way of accomplishing and achieving power, the organization of the workers, without which we can do nothing. That is the answer to that question.

Now, Comrade Allen, you asked a question and you made a statement. You said that the organized peace movement is waiting to identify itself with the Socialist Party, and I want to say to you that I do not recall a single official declaration

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of the organized peace movement that used such language or expressed such opinions.

Now, then, you say this: You say, "What will be done will be decided, not by ourselves, but by our opposition." Now, Comrade Allen, and all of you who agree with him, if that is true you might as well adjourn right now. You should never have come to this convention, because if nothing that you can do here will make any difference with respect to any important problem that we face, then what is the sense of this debate and the formulation of plans and adoption of resolutions? It is because what you will do here will make a difference that I ask you comrades to vote down this resolution. (Applause).

Comrade Krueger: I move that the time be extended for twenty minutes, with two more speakers on each side.

Comrade Berlin: May I amend that to include time for such amendments as will be offered from the floor?

Chairman McDowell: The Chair rules that the only motion in order is on a point of procedure or order. Your suggested procedure was previously rejected by the convention. The only motion we can entertain at this time is a motion to extend the time under the rules as given.

. . . Comrade Vladeck took the Chair . . .

Comrade Levy: I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that there has been no rule by this convention that those who desire to make amendments to any resolution will be gagged. I propose some amendments and I insist upon their being heard.

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair will rule on that when the time comes for it.

There is a motion now that we extend the time of debate for another twenty minutes so as to give an opportunity to two more speakers on each side to express their opinions on this question.

. . . The motion was seconded, voted upon, and carried . . .

Comrade Thomas: Comrade Chairman, Comrades and Friends: The issue that has been raised this afternoon ought to lift up our hearts. It ought to warm our resolutions to act

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to the high plain of Socialism. I am glad that we have come to this place of decision. I do not believe, for my part, the inference that might be drawn from some speeches, that any comrades mean to leave us on this issue, as some comrades—not Morris Hillquit—left us after the St. Louis convention. I do not believe such an inference will be just.

But the issues here are as serious as they were then, and a good deal that has been said seems to be somewhat beside the point. No one, no socialist who knows the record, will reproach any of the comrades who have spoken of cowardice or lack of sincerity.

They have shown their bravery most of them in the black days of the war. Certainly our comrade, the author of "War—What For?" showed this abundantly. No one will deny that in an unjust world it is true that to a very moderate extent some of us have a certain privilege that others lack. I can only say this for myself, that I think that I have been congratulated upon possessing what I lack. I think that no sheriff in the Imperial Valley would know who I was. They might possibly mistake the name for "Norma Talmadge", (laughter) which is the only way that would give me any possible degree of comparative safety. Nor do I think the hideous conditions in the Imperial Valley will be affected one way or the other by a calm, eloquent, straightforward declaration of what socialists mean to do. I am a little surprised that some of our very brilliant and able legal friends have put into the record an apparent confession in advance that to say what we would do in the event of war is illegal. That is not the position they will take in time of need and stress, and it is not the right position for, what after all, do we say? We say, in the event of war we will do thus and so. We say that in the event of the complete collapse of government we will do thus and so. We say that if, after achieving power by constitutional means—I would have thought the left would have attacked this part, not the right—if, after achieving power by constitutional means, there is a struggle against us, then we will act as brave men ought to act. Now what is there in that? What, but what socialists have always said?

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We live in a time when the Social Democracy of Germany—Socialism's Neue Beginnen Group, the Austrian Social Democracy, and even the British Labor Party have adopted in retrospect and in prospect, resolutions at least as bold as this. We live in a time when audiences in churches have stood up and have openly announced that they were not going to support war and would register their objection to war in advance. Shall not the Socialist Party do as much? What is it that we are being asked to do? Simply this: first of all we are asked to present a Declaration of Principles, that deals with the things people want to know about. Most folks know now that socialists believe in certain things. They don't believe in capitalism; they don't believe in the profit system; they do believe in social ownership. But what they are saying to us is: what are you going to do about it? And now, for the first time in the American language, in language that supports democracy, we have, thanks to Devere Allen, an answer that we are proud to stand on, to the kind of questions we shall be asked. (Applause.)

And I rejoice in that statement. We have not superseded past statements, nor wiped out principles that everybody knows we hold. We have explained calmly, yes, but eloquently perhaps, what we meant to do. And what is it? That in the event of war we shall do thus and so.

I am a little shocked and a little pained that there is an apparent defeatist sentiment in this convention.

Our comrades assume that we are defeated, that there will be war, and that we shall be called upon too. Our comrades assume that we will be defeated, and that the test will not be what you can do against poverty and slums, but what will you do for the flag. Some of our comrades make that assumption. I do not want to make it, and I believe that today the one outstanding thing that may prevent war is for the rulers of the world to know that the sentiment we express is increasingly the sentiment of the masses. (Loud applause and cheering.)

If I were one of the Merchants of Death, if I were one of the militarists who accept war, what could please me more



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than to know that even the Socialist Party tacitly assumes that war will probably come, and that we ought to be pretty good boys or we may be caught somehow. If I were a Merchant of Death, if I were a militarist, a blundering politician, and if I were the kind of man who today was making, whether he knew it or not, the war of tomorrow, the one thing that would hold me in check now, the one thing that would hold me in check is this: that there is rising among the people a sentiment of mass resistance to the ever-lasting, the homicidal mania, the death of all we hold dear. For that is what international war means.

This is the way to break that thing: to say we will not fight, you lords and rulers of men. Mass resistance will mean what we are able to make it mean; and I am proud to say now that I would rather, a thousand times over, die in fighting that war of insanity and cruelty than to be conscripted or to hold my peace while the world goes straight to the pit of disaster. (Applause.)

What they are thinking about is not a little war, not a Spanish war, which by the way was wholly unnecessary, Comrade Sharts, and brought no blessing to mankind. What they are thinking about is not even the first world war. If you think seriously of a new war you think of a world so mad and so cruel that your fate will not be determined by declarations of the Socialist Party. It will be determined by the stern arbitrement of that monster, the great god War himself. He will determine your fate, and our words will be idle things. But our resistance, though we be broken, may yet water the seeds of that revolt against cruelty, against the tyranny of war, in which is the only hope of mankind, and if, instead of breaking under a new war, we break instead under fascism, fascism which this Declaration of Principles clearly implies is now at hand, then what will we do? Do any of you believers in democracy believe in democracy? Do you seriously mean that if in chaos, without firm leadership, we have a chance to form a government, we must wait for a majority vote in a lunatic asylum? (Applause and laughter.)

It is all right for my friend Comrade Lee to say that he

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doesn't believe it, but all this Declaration of Principles says is that in the event of that kind of chaos we hold the orderly foundation of the socialist society far more important than lip service to an impossible principle of mechanistic democracy. That is all.

And Comrade Sharts should know, should be willing to tell the people even on the sidewalks that we are in line with the great leaders of America who have always stood for the revolutionary right of men. For that we stand, and we stand for it as do sane sober men. We say we want order and we want peace. We want order and peace so much that we will not train our young folks in the art of war; we want order and peace so much that we oppose and hate the kind of military fascism that the Assistant Secretary of War endorsed in a widely circulated article; we want peace so much that we will not vote for that preparation which is not preparation for peace, but for war. We say we want peace and the well-being of our children so much that in the event of madness striking our rulers we will act as best we can. And you talk to us now, some of you socialists, who are overcome with weakness, and you say: but you can't do anything?

I say we can. But not unless, unlike our European comrades, we begin now to say: we will do it, and plan for the power to do it. That is what we are saying. (Applause.) And that is why whatever you think of one word or another, I beg you to stand with the one clear cut American declaration on the meaning and function of democracy and the limits of democracy in the maintenance of peace and the establishment of Socialism. I congratulate you on the chance! (Applause and cheering.)

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair now recognizes Comrade Wallace, of Indiana.

Comrade Wallace: Comrade Solomon said that he never felt less like making a speech in his life. After listening to Comrade Norman Thomas and attempting to follow him—did you ever try to follow an accomplished orator, especially when you undertook to take issue with him on a question?—Well, that is the way I feel now. Not that I am convinced, however,

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that my position in this thing is wrong. It is evident from what has been said and what has been done here that it is not very popular in this convention. My friends, this is not a question of lefts and rights, because if it were I would be speaking from the left. My worst enemy would not accuse me of belonging to the right. It is a question of naming a policy of the Socialist Party.

I might say that my good friend, and comrade, Norman Thomas got clear away from the question, wandered all over the field and trampled on the grass and ended as if it were a question of establishing Socialism. It isn't. The point we are undertaking to discuss now is a question of the discussion of this thing which purports to be a declaration of principles. It is not. It is a question of what you would do now, today, in case you were confronted with a condition of actual war.

My friends, I am not a very young man; I remember the last war. I went through it, as a member of the party. I remained as a state chairman of Indiana when it was dangerous to remain. I saw the state office kept open by a woman. I saw it raided time and again, and if there had been in our literature a declaration like this, I dare say, Comrade Henry would be in the penitentiary to this day.

That Declaration of 1917 was not like this. I hold it in my hand. I call your attention to the fact that it does not say, nor is it susceptible to the actual construction of massed resistance, massed war resistance.

It happens that I am one of the abhorred lawyers. My comrades, I am not a speaker of the caliber of Comrade Thomas. All I can do is stand here and talk to you, as I would if we talked across a desk to each other. We are prone, in times like this, to become emotional, and play to the galleries. We even allow the galleries to applaud, to stir us to emotion, and cause us to lose our senses. Let us be practical and see what would happen. My friends, I say to you, and I say this as a lawyer: there is not a capitalist court in the country but what if it were placed before them would say that it is treason in time of war, and I know that my

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other comrades here who have practiced in the capitalist courts, and who perhaps have as much contempt for capitalist law as I have, know also that it would be declared treason if it were carried before them.

Comrade Kirkpatrick asked you what you meant, and if you propose to lay into the hands of your enemies swords and ropes and bludgeons. And I say to you it would be the surest way of doing it. I am not afraid of it. They couldn't hurt me very much. I went through the other war, when, after war was declared, they cut out like rats desert a ship, when they found they would be arrested.

My friends, there is a practical phase. This thing has been held up to you as a thing which would increase the membership of the party. I say it would not. I ask you—in case war were declared today, in case the war drums beat tonight, and the tramp of men marching in the street began, and the war mania began to spread out and run mad—what would you do? If you were going to new comrades tomorrow, and asked them to become members of your party, would you warn them in advance that there is a thing in the Declaration of your Principles which would lead them to the gallows if they joined you? Would you? If you don't, and that thing is there and you know it now, if you don't warn them against it and tell them they had better find out about it, and you drag them in under false pretenses, you are a bunch of skunks. Are you going to do that?

My friends, the question here is not whether or not we will be opposed to armaments, whether or not we will be opposed to war, whether or not we will continue to stand in the historic position the Socialist Party has always stood in. It is a question of using common sense. Of course we are opposed to all those things. We are opposed to the building up of armaments, but we should have more sense than to undertake to write, regardless of what you may have in your minds, regardless of how unpopular it may be, to write it into a Declaration of Principles which will in many instances be used like a platform, and in case of war will be used



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against you as a platform, we ought to have more sense than that. And that is not the question before you now, my comrades. It is not a question of whether or not we will take action in case of war. I am heartily in favor of providing here that in case a war breaks out that we shall take action. And I will tell you what kind of action, and that is the kind of action that you are perfectly safe in writing into this, and it is the kind of action that will be in accord with socialist tradition, and that is: a general strike. That is as effective as you can make it. If you cannot make a general strike effective then you cannot make war resistance, mass war resistance effective.

So, my friends, I am asking you as a matter of common sense not as a matter of factionalism,—I am aware that there are two factions here, and although I have voted consistently with one of the factions here I am not a factionalist—I beg you in the name of the Socialist Party, in the name of Socialism, not to do a foolish thing and adopt this thing as it is. I ask you to do something with it: vote it down. Send it back and have us go on record as favoring a general strike that will paralyze everything from one end of the country to the other, as it is the most effective means in the world.

I say to you that in massed war resistance, if it means violence, you will be smothered to death with gas fumes in the first attempt. It is nonsense, it is craziness. Let us be practical. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair now recognizes Comrade Hoan, of Milwaukee.

Comrade Oneal: I want to ask as a point of information:

Considering that practically every delegate except one who has spoken upon the proposition before us, has approached the St. Louis Resolution, is it within orderly procedure for this convention to consider the adoption of the St. Louis resolution, edited and brought down to modern date?

Chairman Vladeck: No that would not be in order. We are dealing with the recommendation of the Committee on Platform.

Comrade Hoan: Comrades, it is contended, and it has

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been contended here by Comrade Solomon, that this document is reckless. I regret that I did not see it before one-half hour ago, but I have done my best to study it as carefully as I can in that short time, and I propose to confine myself to the teeth of this resolution, on those portions of it which apparently are so mysterious.

I wish to deny that it is reckless, and I wish to say that if there is anybody in this party who has been against making blue prints for the future it has been Dan Hoan of Milwaukee. I want to say to you that one of the greatest weaknesses—those of you who fear this declaration—one of the greatest weaknesses of the Socialist Party in the United States and in Europe is its blindness to some of the obvious collapses that come to us under capitalism.

I shall not talk to you about Russia, I shall not talk to you about what was done there; nor shall I go to Germany and tell what the socialists did there. I will stick to the United States.

There was a time, comrades, when we had about twenty cities under the banner of the Socialist Party, and one after the other these cities went to rot. Why? Because they used the spoils system, and they fought for the jobs. Whether you like that or not, it is true, and in Milwaukee we still live because we have stood on the proposition of the merit system in our appointments.

What does this document do? It looks ahead, at obvious crises that are bound to confront us in this country. Let us speak for a moment of the St. Louis platform. I have been a public official longer than most any other city official in this country. I had to face the St. Louis platform as mayor of Milwaukee. That platform went much further than this, and I will be surprised if the radicals don't call this a "pink tea" document before we get through with it. The St. Louis platform not only confined itself to the general strike, it pledged us to do all in our power against this war. I was mayor of the City of Milwaukee, and I said: "My God! Why can't that convention look ahead and see what I would be up against?" I was drafted to run the draft in Milwaukee. I was

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drafted to do a lot of things, and I went to the Socialist Central Committee, and I said, "What am I to do? As your servant I stand ready to resign in protest, if that is what that platform means. But for me to go ahead and carry on this war—I don't propose to be called a hypocrite. I am not living up to the St. Louis platform. If that is what you want, tell me to do it." They told me to resign. And that is what I did. (Applause.)

I want to say, comrades, we adopted a platform more violent against war in Milwaukee, in 1917, than the St. Louis platform, but we left that provision out, and in the middle of the war, or shortly after, when I went on the platform, they served notice on us under the heading of the Ku Klux Klan that they proposed to keep us out of the City Hall. I called in the Chief of Police who was one of the triumvirate that ruled that town in olden days. He had a life job; I never gave him orders, I had no such authority. I gave him no advice until that time. I said, "Did you see the notice in the morning paper of what they propose to do? To take possession of the City Hall and see who is going to run this government?"

He said, "What do you advise? The people to arm?"

I said, "No, I am not so foolish, but I am going to tell you something and you send it back to the powers that be in this town. We are for law and for order. We have helped you make a reputation, but by the gods, if they want violence and they touch a hair on a head of black or white, of Protestant or Catholic, of Victor Berger or anyone else, we will get two of theirs for every one they touch. (Applause and laughter.) This is a statement that has never before been made public, but there was no Ku Klux Klan in Milwaukee because we served adequate notice upon the powers that be of what we proposed to do. It prevented Ku Kluxism in our town; it never got a start.

Now let's get down to this resolution.

First of all the St. Louis platform says: "We will do all in our power to avert war." What does this do? It specifies exactly what we are to do: "They will meet war and the de-

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tailed plans for war already mapped out by the war-making arms of the government, by massed war resistance." Organized how? I hope if there is a general strike I will know that other mayors have been elected on similar platforms and that I can depend upon their cooperation, socialistically. (Laughter.)

Now: "... organized so far as practical. . . ." Just think of that! My God, if the extremists of the right wing shoved in that word perhaps it would be called a "pink tea" idea; "... so far as practical in a general strike . . ." and if socialists are not ready to go ahead and go on with all they can do against war, can they get the workers? Why "practical"? We don't know whether the workers in the unions and the others will support us, but are we so cowardly we will not tell men who are nominated in the future in this country on our ticket, that if war comes we expect to cooperate with the working class in a general strike if it is practical in this country?

The next notice is: "In its struggle for a new society, the Socialist Party seeks to attain its objectives by peaceful and orderly means. Recognizing the increasing resort by a crumbling capitalist order to fascism to preserve its integrity and dominance, the Socialist Party intends not to be deceived by fascist propaganda nor overwhelmed by fascist force. It will do all in its power to fight fascism of every kind, all the time, and everywhere in the world, until fascism is dead."

My forefathers also were in the Revolutionary War; my father was in the war, but if I cannot participate with the workers against more war, I am not worth the powder to blow me to hell. (Applause.)

"It will do all in its power to fight fascism of every kind, all the time, and everywhere in the world, until fascism is dead. . . . Its methods may include a recourse," "may" "... to a general strike which will not merely serve as a defense against fascist counter-revolution, but will carry the revolutionary struggle into the camp of the enemy." If we are not going to carry that struggle into the camp of the enemy let's quit now!



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"The Socialist Party proclaims anew its faith in economic and political democracy." It goes on, my time is short, "If the crisis comes through the denial of majority rights after the electorate has given us a mandate we shall not hesitate to crush by our labor solidarity the reckless forces of reaction and to consolidate the socialist state." "If"—"if"—they deny my majority rights in this republic. Are you afraid to tell your mayors, your congressmen, and those who want to run for office what they are going to do, "If"? "If the capitalist system should collapse," what are we to do? I have asked that question myself already in Milwaukee the last two years as mayor, trying to make good there under the breakdown of a system, when people cannot pay their taxes. What am I to do? I want to know your answer. And every man you run for mayor in this country ought to know the answer. Here is our answer:

If they deny us our rights under this republic our answer is, "If the capitalist system should collapse in a general chaos," think of that comrades! ". . . In a general chaos," my God, are we too cowardly to tell our elected officials what to do "if there is general chaos and confusion which cannot permit of orderly procedure, the Socialist Party, whether or not in such a case it is a majority, will not shrink from the responsibility of organizing and maintaining a government under the workers' rule."

Comrades, when they threatened democracy in Milwaukee and the right of legal procedure, I sent notice then that if they insisted upon violence against our will, then we would resort to "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (Applause.)

Comrades, I want to close: if it is treason to tell those fellows who run on our tickets that we expect them to hew to the line and not go this way and that way as they have done so often, if it is treason to tell the workers, the farmers and everybody what we will do if they bring on the most damnable curses democracy has ever seen, war and fascism, if that is treason I am with Patrick Henry—or with the man who said, "If that be treason, then make the most of it."

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(Applause and cheering.)

Chairman Vladeck: Comrades, the Chair now recognizes Comrade Louis Waldman, of New York.

You understand that I do not call upon the speakers at will. I consult the leaders of the factions, and they tell me upon whom I shall call. The people who are against this platform want Louis Waldman to speak, and he will speak.

Comrade Louis Waldman: Comrade Chairman and comrade delegates of the convention. Apparently my good friend Norman Thomas, and my distinguished colleague the Mayor of Milwaukee did not get together with Devere Allen who also spoke for this resolution. They both denied that anything in this proclamation is intended to be illegal. Devere had the honesty and the forthrightness to tell us (as it is a matter of record here) that it is the intentions of the authors of this declaration that we are committed to illegal steps in the event of war.

I think we ought to draw the issue and ought to understand ourselves. Allen was right. Thomas and Hoan are wrong. But the fact that three speakers on the same declaration, equally authoritative, come to such opposite conclusions is an indication that it is not we who are confessing in the record, but the authors of the resolution itself.

Now I am going to answer a few arguments advanced and then proceed further to ask a few pertinent questions of the leaders and sponsors of this declaration. Comrade Hapgood made a statement that the reason why we are not succeeding, and the reason why labor is not supporting us more broadly is because we are not left enough. I invite the attention of this delegation to a very recent campaign, a referendum, that was held in the United States, a national referendum. One of the speakers for this declaration who doesn't belong to the school of thought apparently that I and my other colleagues belong to, was one of the persons upon whom the referendum was held. Hoover spoke for the bankers of reaction. Roosevelt spoke for special interests in the United States. Norman Thomas spoke for himself and the party. The vote on the referendum was some sixteen or seventeen

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million American working class votes for Roosevelt; some seven or eight million for Hoover, and a bare eight hundred thousand for Norman Thomas.

We are not left enough! Dreamers! Visionaries! Romanticists! Why don't you adjourn and wake up tomorrow? We are not left enough for American labor, that is the reason you want a suicidal declaration to be made today!

Let me answer another statement which sounds well from the platform, but in fact is untruthful. My eloquent friend, Norman Thomas, made a plea, a plea I love to hear him make, that we are opposed to the carnage, the cruelty of war. Good heavens! Is there a man or a woman in this convention that doesn't agree with him? Is there a man or a woman in this convention who will not join with him in a cry against war? What we are opposing is not a protest against war, and that is what speakers like Norman Thomas present to you—a picture not of the revolution but of a common aspiration, and it sounds plausible. We aspire to the day when we can have a great sentiment opposed to war, comrades, but what we oppose, comrades, is writing into a Declaration of Principles a resolution which will bind us, fetter us, paralyze us and frustrate our efforts to build, in the United States, a public opinion opposed to the cruelties, the disasters and the carnages of war. That is why we are opposed to this resolution.

Now let me go to the resolution proper, and let me ask my friends—this isn't a technical debate, it is a debate of life and death, of a movement which is dear to our hearts: What does this declaration provide for? Five propositions: one—and if Dan Hoan didn't study it enough let him study it a little further—one, an alliance with those who break the law. This convention by this declaration soberly declares in the following language, which I beg you to analyze and answer for yourselves, Norman, and Dan Hoan and the rest of you. Turn to page two—it says, "They (the Socialist Party) will loyally support, in the tragic event of war, any of their comrades who . . . come in conflict with public opinion or the law" in times of war. Throwing a bomb in an anti-war at-

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titude, blowing up munitions plants in an anti-war attitude, doing any illegal act in an anti-war attitude is being in violation of law, and you ask me to subscribe in advance, write myself down in a declaration, a stupid declaration, that I pledge myself to such a maniacal attitude in time of war? Stupidity has never run wilder than it runs in this declaration.

You quote to me the St. Louis resolution. I dare you, I dare any one of you to produce a single phrase from the St. Louis resolution which is so stupid, so ignorantly conceived, so blindly implanted as in the context of this resolution. I challenge you, friends, to produce for us a single declaration in the St. Louis resolution which commits you to the general strike for revolutionary purpose, apart from the resistance of war.

This resolution goes further than merely calling for a general strike to resist war; it declares the use of the general strike for revolutionary purposes. That is an abandonment of the traditional socialist position, and a declaration of illegal use of illegal methods.

Let me go further, to the third declaration: I challenge you to produce in the St. Louis resolution a third declaration which is in this document, the declaration that we shall resist war by mass resistance, in the language used, and I ask you to produce for me a fourth proposition in the St. Louis resolution which is contained in these documents, that whether you have a majority or not, in case of general capitalist collapse you will set up a government, with or without authority or mandate. Find that in the St. Louis resolution.

What do you mean by "general collapse"? Who is to define it? Under what circumstances will you set up your revolutionary government for which you declare? How much chaos must there be? How much collapse must there be? Who will sit in judgment? Who will appraise the facts? Who will determine the situation?

Nonsense, my friends!

And finally, for the fifth proposition of the declaration, of the dictatorship of the proletariat in this resolution, and I warn you, even the St. Louis resolution brought to the party,



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from a point of view that should be judged honestly, great disaster for at least ten years after the war. Let us not blind ourselves. I supported the St. Louis resolution. I was a member of the New York legislature when mobs crowded the chamber when I spoke against the war, in time of war, when we sat up late on February 11th and argued the question of war, when we were hissed and booed, and attacked, and assailed, but we stood true and loyal to the party declaration. But comrades, let us be truthful, it all but ruined our party after the war.

Let me say this one more word, and then I shall be grateful to you for the attention you have given me: my comrades and friends, this resolution cannot be chopped up into sentences. You will not be true to yourselves if you do. It cannot be chopped up into paragraphs. A philosophy is expressed in this resolution; a theory of government is expressed in this resolution; an interpretation of history is expressed in this resolution. I differ from that theory of government; I differ from that philosophy; I differ from that interpretation of history, and I differ from the prognostication of the sponsors of this declaration.

My comrades and friends, my difference is not a personal one; it is a difference of millions of socialists, socialists who understand their mission, socialists who understand their purpose, socialists who are revolutionary in character but who have no illusions.

My comrades, defeat this resolution, not by phrase or paragraph, defeat this philosophy, and let us make a socialist declaration upon which we can build and grow and succeed in our power for rule, in our power for prestige and confidence before the working class of the United States. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair recognizes Comrade Coldwell, of Rhode Island.

Comrade Coldwell: I just want to say that if the time has come when the Socialist Party members are afraid to say what they believe, the time has come to take down the red flag and the picture of Eugene V. Debs. (Applause.) 'Gene Debs was not afraid to speak in Canton, when he was told

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in advance that if he said certain things he would be charged with violating the espionage act, and would probably be sent to prison. 'Gene Debs had the courage of his convictions, and he expressed those convictions. Are we less worthy of the confidence than 'Gene Debs was? Are we today too cowardly and supine to express what we believe are the necessary sentiments to express on this evil of fascism and war? I maintain that we are not.

Patriotism has been raised here. The flag has been waved. I want to relate to you a little experience I had in my office as state secretary of the Socialist Party in Rhode Island. When the war was declared secret service agents were appointed to shadow us, and spy on us. I called them the "sneakret service". They planted a dictaphone in my office, and where do you suppose they planted it? Underneath the American flag, not underneath the red flag. So don't worry about the flag. I too was at the St. Louis convention, and it is one of my proudest boasts that I had the privilege of taking part in that convention and formulating the principle laid down in that platform. I fought strenuously, and led a group for the insertion of a phrase that you will find in that St. Louis program that was not in the first draft, and that is, that we are opposed to all wars, including so-called defensive wars, and we had that placed in the platform.

I have asked that if they are going to bury me, that they bury me with a copy of the St. Louis platform, and when you pass this I hope that you will include a copy of this platform. (Applause.) I am sure when the devil goes around looking for his hirelings he won't find one carrying a copy of that platform to his grave. (Applause.)

They talk about the danger to us if we pass this. I want to tell you my friends, of the right, who are usually wrong, that you legal luminaries (laughter) are now weaving the web that may convict us if we are charged with being traitors, because the courts, the district attorneys will state that you were very ably advised by some eminent members of the bar against this, but you don't hesitate to do so, do you? No. No. You are as bad as the S. L. P.'s who used to try to get us

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to commit ourselves when the "sneakret service" was down there taking notes.

Now the point is that legality isn't respected very much for the simple reason that the powers that be, when they want to do anything, never question legality. They go ahead and do it. In this respect I am reminded of a notice I saw in a reporters'—a newspaper reporters' room. On the wall was this sign: "You can do anything that you can get away with." And we can do anything that we can get away with, if we only have the courage to do it. That is all. We lack courage. All right, this thing will give us courage. This will inspire us to go ahead. Toledo will inspire us. Minneapolis inspired us. The taxicab drivers inspired us. All these mass actions inspire us. We will go ahead to further and further mass action against war, and against fascism.

We are accused of infantile leftism. Well, we may be. I want to call your attention to this, that there is always a chance for infants to develop, but our opposition is not the infantile leftists, but the senile rightists. (Laughter and applause.)

Now as far as I am concerned, this declaration does not suit me. Had I the right to rewrite it, I would make it still more left. (Applause.) I would make it still more emphatic. I would make it so that there could be no possible chance of even using the word "practical" or "practically". I would say: Go ahead and do it, for the simple reason that when the time comes, you are going to be shot anyhow.

Look how they treated our comrades in Austria. Now I am not for steam-heated sidewalks or overhead sewers, I am for the whole works! (Laughter and applause.)

Goodbye comrades, if I don't see you again, I will meet you in prison. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: Under the rules the chairman of the committee now has five minutes for summing up.

Comrade Levy: I arise to a point of order.

Comrade Panken: I arise to a point of procedure.

Chairman Vladeck: Proceed Comrade Panken.

Comrade Panken: Under the rules as I understand it, as

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agreed, the chairman of the committee has a five-minute period in support of the resolution and one member in opposition to the resolution may speak. I reserve my right to speak in opposition to the resolution.

Chairman Vladeck: I am not aware of any such rule.

Comrade Levy: My point of order is on the question as to whether or not, by now allowing the reporter of the committee to have his last say, you are thereby precluding the possibility of amendment from the floor to this resolution.

Chairman Vladeck: I have already ruled that I will rule on that question when we come to voting.

Now Comrade Biemiller will speak for the committee.

Comrade Levy: I arise to a point of procedure, Comrade Chairman.

Chairman Vladeck: There is no point of procedure now, there is nothing before the house but the summing up by Comrade Biemiller who is the chairman of the committee.

I shall be glad to recognize Comrade Levy when the time comes.

Comrade Biemiller: Comrade Chairman and Comrades. Speaking for six out of seven members of the committee, I was very glad that early in this debate Comrade Solomon raised the point that the debate should be on the report as a whole, and Comrade Waldman reiterated that later on in the debate. That is the way we wanted this thing discussed. We are not interested in piecemeal attacks on it. There is a philosophy involved in it, we make no bones about it; it is the philosophy of revolutionary Socialism, and we are standing by it throughout this entire report. (Applause.)

Now comrades, the six members who signed this report are men who have seen many workers and farmers in action during the last year, they are all men who pretty well know the temper of the American workers and farmers today. Comrade Hofses in Reading has seen the virtual general strike that took place in that city last summer. Comrade Thomas has roamed all over the country and knows a good deal about the rising tide of radicalism in the ranks of American labor. Comrade Anderson comes from the midst of the Illinois coal



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mines and knows what the coal diggers are thinking about in these days. Comrade Ameringer comes from the farmers of the Southwest and knows about the new rise of radicalism in that area. Comrade Allen is well acquainted with the situation in New England. It has been my own pleasure to participate in the strikes of the farmers and workers in Wisconsin. We know that workers are on the march. We do not agree with Comrade Waldman that the workers are playing a slow, steady game. That is no longer true. Each week brings us fresh evidence. It is upon this general information and upon this general philosophy that this committee proceeded.

Now first of all, like Comrade Coldwell, it is very interesting to me that the only people who seem to get very excited about the legality of certain provisions of this report are our legal friends. Our legal friends sometimes seem to forget certain fundamental Marxist ideas. They seem to forget that famous old phrase of Karl Marx, that the government is the executive committee of the capitalist class, and that the government as such, and the laws which the government makes, represent the will of the capitalist class. (Applause.) Now, if you want to start arguing legalism you are introducing a subject that can take hours and hours and hours. But let us not forget that existing laws today are capitalist laws, and workers sometimes have a lot of different ideas about laws than a group of capitalists have.

The attack upon this report is based primarily upon two ideas that are in it: first it is based upon what the report says in regard to the accession and acquisition of power. I must agree with many other comrades who have spoken in defense of this report, that I believe that those three principles laid down, those three different kinds of procedure depending on objective positions, have always been the view of real socialists. If you deny it, you are betraying the Austrian workers whose valiant struggle we all gloried in. In February of this year, when the Austrian workers saw legal means taken away from them they did not hesitate to attempt to defend their rights by a resort to any tactics which they found necessary in that situation.

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That is only one example in the long history of the working class, but it is the most recent and it seems to me that all of us could very well come to this report in the spirit of the immortal Kolomon Wallisch, who not only was jailed because he took socialist action, but who died, and who died with the words on this lips, "Long live Socialism; long live Liberty."

It is in that spirit, comrades, that this report is written in the records of the socialist parties throughout the entire world.

The other objection has been raised on the little clause about mass resistance, upon the idea that in the event of war socialists will oppose that war, and will oppose it by any means at their command. Now Comrade Waldman raises the point that in the St. Louis platform you cannot find the phrase "mass resistance". That is true, but I want to read you what the St. Louis platform does say:

"We recommend to the workers and pledge ourselves to the following course of action; continuous active and public opposition to the war through demonstrations, mass petitions and all other means within our power."

Now maybe a legalist can see the difference between "mass resistance" and "all other means within our power", but I am damned if I can. (Applause.) I can see no difference whatsoever.

Comrade Wallace speaks for instance about a general strike, instead of mass resistance. He says in mass resistance you get gas. I wonder if you ever heard of any strikers getting gassed at any time in their lives? This is a play with phrases. The general idea that is in here is the idea that the committee stands for; it stands for the idea of using every possible means of resisting war. It is the exact statement of the St. Louis platform. In other words comrades, we submit this Declaration of Principles, maintaining that it is in the best traditions of not only the Socialist Party of America, but of the socialist movement throughout the entire world, and we recommend it to you in that spirit. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: There is nothing before the house

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now except to vote on the previous question.

Comrade Levy: A point of information: after the previous question has been passed and debate closed on the resolution as a whole, will the Chairman permit amendments from the floor?

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair will not permit any such amendments for the simple reason that our whole discussion proceeded on the understanding that if this recommendation of the Platform Committee will be considered, it will be considered as a whole.

Comrade Levy: I appeal from the decision of the Chair.

Comrade Hendin: Comrade Chairman, I want you to rule according to the rules of Roberts' Rules of Order, and I wish to say it is unprecedented to present a document in any convention, and particularly at a socialist convention, and to ask us to accept the entire document, line, hook and sinker. Some may want to accept this document as a basis, and offer amendments. I therefore suggest that when you vote upon—

Chairman Vladeck: You are out of order, comrade. This question will be decided by an appeal from the decision of the Chair.

You may state your appeal, Comrade Levy.

... Vice-Chairman McDowell assumed the chair ...

Comrade Levy: I have appealed from the decision of the Chair, which might be ordinarily deemed merely a matter of procedure, but as a matter of fact, on this resolution, in this important matter and at this convention, it is a matter of substance to a number of comrades to whom I have spoken.

It is all right to have a debate, and a Roman holiday on one side or the other, of the great oratorical powers in the socialist movement, but after that debate we must come to a decision, comrades, come to a decision on every word, on every line in that resolution. And when we come to a decision we come to a decision not for ourselves individually, but for at least thirty thousand socialists, members of the party throughout the country.

I want to say to you, and I say it in all seriousness, that

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never before in any socialist organization or meeting which I have attended has any chairman ruled that we must accept a document submitted to us, as Comrade Hendin said, hook, line and sinker, or not accept it at all. I don't propose to be compelled to vote on such a proposition, when I think, and I am convinced of it, without being a legal luminary, that it is out of order to rule that the floor cannot present amendments to a resolution.

The Chairman said that the debate proceeded upon the ground that there would be a vote only upon the resolution as a whole, pro or con. You, comrades, will recollect that I stood up several times during that debate and asked for leave to take the floor, and Comrade Vladeck ruled, "I will pass upon that later," and "I will pass upon that later," and when he passed upon it later, he passed upon it against amendments from the floor. If that was his intention the right thing for the chairman to have done was to have ruled it the first time I spoke, and then the debate would not have proceeded upon accepting the resolution as a whole or not at all.

I say to you, comrades, in view of the remarks that were made by Comrade Allen and by Comrade Waldman, that there is something drastic in this resolution which may lead to a legal determination. Amendments from the floor should be welcomed and not cut off. This is far too important to rely upon the whim or the caprice of a chairman directly contrary to a democratic socialist principle. I ask you to vote against sustaining the Chair. (Applause.)

Comrade Vladeck: I simply wish to state that no delegate must vote for the Declaration of Principles. In fact the Chair itself intends to vote against it, except that I do not think it fair to the convention to have discussed most of the aspects of this Declaration of Principles as we did and then go over the whole thing again, piecemeal. If any delegate doesn't like one sentence, or one word, or one iota, or one comma, or one period, he can vote against it. Nobody will stop him from doing so. That is why at this time I think we are ready for a vote on the Declaration of Principles as a whole.



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... the question of sustaining the Chair was put to a vote and the Chair was sustained ...

... Chairman Vladeck resumed the Chair ...

... the previous question was then voted upon and carried ...

Chairman Vladeck: Now my attention is called to Rule 10 of our Rules which says that Roberts' Rules of Order shall be used, with the exception that when the previous question has been carried one delegate from each side may speak for five minutes. Before we take the actual vote I shall recognize one speaker for and one one speaker against for five minutes each.

Comrade Panken of New York will speak against.

Comrade Goebel: Comrade Levy has been ruled out, why shouldn't he be the one who speaks against? Give him five minutes.

Chairman Vladeck: I shall leave it to Comrade Levy and Comrade Panken to decide between themselves who shall speak.

Comrade Panken: I understand, Comrade Chairman, that the Rule is the man for, speaks first and the opposition speaks after.

Chairman Vladeck: No, it simply says: one delegate for each side.

Comrade Panken: I am more or less in a state which is rather hard on me. The situation in the discussion of this so-called Declaration of Principles has developed in a manner in which two opposing philosophies in the socialist group have been presented. I wish it had been possible that in the discussion of this Declaration of Principles that line of demarcation could have been avoided, and possibly a Declaration of Principles agreed upon which would be satisfactory to the convention. But, we are face to face with a cleavage within the socialist movement, in so far as philosophy is concerned, and not in so far as words or phrases are concerned.

I was glad to hear Comrade Biemiller make his very frank statement, and I was glad to hear Comrade Allen make his frank statement, and now, what do those two statements

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amount to when reduced to simple language? They amount to this: these comrades ask us to accept this Declaration of Principles on the theory that the American working class movement has reached a point in its development which requires an abandonment of resorting to the democratic means in an attempt to solve the problems confronting American labor, and to resort instead to illegal means, to resort, if you please, to the same methods which are being advanced by our communist friends, as a possible solution of the problems in America today.

You cannot cloak this, by saying, Comrade Hoan, that you are going to give some direction to your mayors, or to your assemblymen; you cannot cloak this, Comrade Thomas, by saying in one instance that we are going to appeal to the democratic method, and when we show some strength, and there is a chaos that we will then proceed to take over the government. You cannot cloak it, because in very specific language you say to the American working class that the Socialist Party of America, that we as socialists, will support all of those who embark upon illegal means to accomplish the end for which we stand.

There is a definite cleavage between us now on that proposition as far as I am concerned, and as far as the comrades for whom I hope I speak are concerned.

We believe that we can, in America, by proper organization of the working class, by a proper appeal to the working class, get power by purely peaceful and democratic methods, and when you charge us by implication even, that we are not as courageous as you are, I answer you that that was the position of Eugene Victor Debs. That was the position of all the socialists who have gone to jail in defense of the right of free speech and the right of the socialist movement of America, and that has been our position and is our position today. And let me remind you, comrades, those of you who were delegates to the convention of the Socialist Party of America in 1920, Bill Kruse, came in with practically the same sort of a declaration of principles and asked us to adopt it. In 1912 practically the same sort of a declaration of prin-

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ciples was proposed for adoption by the Socialist Party. Let me repeat what I said to Kruse in 1920; what I said to Ingalls in 1920—"When the time comes that the working class of America obtains, gets, the government, and there is a counter-revolution against the working class we will take arms and defend the revolution of the working class." (Applause.)

And I say to you this afternoon, comrades: vote on this proposition only from this angle—do we want to abandon the democratic method in the attempt to gain power in the United States, or do we not? Do we want to resort to violence in order to achieve our purposes? These—these—are the questions that are presenting themselves to you in this Declaration of Principles.

I have always been a militant socialist, and I hope to live on until I die, a militant socialist, fighting for the working class, but I want to fight practically, I want to fight sanely. I don't want to victimize the fools who will take this thing as current and will proceed to perform illegal acts. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: The Chair will now call upon the last speaker, Comrade Frank Crosswaith. (Applause.)

Comrade Crosswaith: Comrade Chairman, fellow delegates, I had hoped that this convention would end without my having to openly participate in any of the discussions of the debate dealing with problems of this sort. However, I am reminded of the words of a great poet who once said:

"Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide  
In the strife with truth and falsehood,  
For the good, or evil side,"

and so I propose to speak for the adoption of this resolution. Before I do so, permit me to say that there are many parts of it with which I do not agree.

The point made by Comrade Waldman where we pledge ourselves to defend anybody in opposition to the war, and what they may do, I think is a point that ought not to appear, but the document generally is sound, it is sound Socialism and it is sound courage.

## The American Socialist Quarterly

In answer to Comrade Panken, who asked if we are going to abandon democratic methods to achieve our purpose, the answer is: no. And so says this declaration. There is a passage here on page two which says: "In its struggle for a new society, the Socialist Party seeks to attain its objectives by peaceful and orderly means." That is the English language, and may be clearly understood by all of us.

Now, I am not a lawyer. I am in every sense of the word a proletarian, and a socialist, and because I am not a lawyer, comrades, but a layman and a socialist, I recognize that we have come to a point where we look over the record of this capitalist dominated world, and we know that laws, which we are called upon to keep our eyes on as we seek to promote the emancipation of our class, have been made by our masters, and they have been made to tie our feet. (Applause and cheering). And we know too that wherever, in spite of these laws made against us, we have sought to establish a position wherein we eventually will be freed, we know that legality has never meant a darn thing to the ruling class of the world. (Applause.) The graves tonight in Vienna speak more eloquently than any words I can say to you, to substantiate that fact; the graves of the martyred working men and socialists in Vienna show you what the capitalists think of even those laws which they have made.

Now comrades, it is the recognized fact by all of us who are socialists, that we have reached the crucial moment in the life of the capitalist system.

Men and women of our class are beginning to recognize, in increasing numbers, the importance of organization, the importance of power, power with which to bury and get rid of the stinking carcass of the capitalist system off the face of the earth.

This is a moment when men of courage must stand up and be counted, and we who support this resolution, we can reach back with our fingers for they are long enough, into American history and find precedent for this resolution. I have before me here a statement made by no other outstanding American than Thomas Jefferson, one hundred and fifty years



## Declaration of Principles

ago. Thomas Jefferson, arguing for the rights of the people to abandon or destroy the form of government when it becomes oppressive and denies to them the right to life, liberty and happiness, says:

“Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it.”

Now my friends, the point is this: we have declared for peaceful liberation of our enslaved men. We know what the masters have done—we know what they have done in Vienna, we know what they have done in Germany, and we know what they are seeking to do in other parts of the world with the working class, reaching out at last for power. We would be cowardly, indeed, if we do not say we stand for a peaceful solution to this problem, but if you decide that you shall not permit us to do so, by God we intend to be free, and that is all there is to it. (Applause and cheering.)

Comrades, I am not going to talk longer, there is no need for it; this is a new day and a new type of socialist; socialists who are not romanticists, socialists with their feet on the floor, have come into being. Twenty years of my life I have spent in the socialist movement. I have seen the American flag, like Comrade Sharts. I have seen it not only in the United States, I have seen it in other countries; I have followed it, and carried it, if you please, around the world on two occasions, but I have no desire to hide behind the American flag. Why should I? This thing is bigger than flags; this thing is humanity itself; this thing is in the interest of the working class whom we are organized to protect, and I say to you, comrades, there is nothing else for us to do. If we are not to go to jail when the time comes, why they are going to kill us anyhow, and we might as well go there with our heads up like men should in any crisis. (Applause.) I am not going to talk longer for my throat begins to pain me. I am confident that we are going to endorse this resolution and amend it wherever the amendments are necessary. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: We are now ready for the vote.

## The American Socialist Quarterly

. . . the question was called for, and upon a rising vote, the chairman called for the roll call . . .

Comrade Fagan: May anyone reserve the right to explain his vote?

Chairman Vladeck: No.

The secretary will now call the roll.

Comrade Lee: Before you proceed to another state I demand the right to explain my vote.

. . . motion was made to make it a matter of personal privilege to permit Comrade Lee to explain his vote . . .

Chairman Vladeck: The motion is made to give Comrade Lee the floor by unanimous consent to explain his vote. Is there any objection?

If there is no objection, for what purpose does the delegate rise?

Comrade Lee: In view of this unprecedented ruling that no amendment or substitute would be moved before the debate, nor during the debate, nor after the debate, any vote that I would cast would in part misrepresent my views. I am in either case compelled to vote for a declaration which only partially stands for that which I unreservedly stand for. With that word on record, I vote no.

Comrade Fagan: I now demand the right to vote and explain my vote.

Chairman Vladeck: Comrades, Comrade Fagan of Michigan will now vote, and explain his vote.

Comrade Fagan: I abstained from voting, and now take the privilege of voting, reserving the right to explain my vote to this extent: there has been in this convention a centrist steamroller that has not permitted the left to be heard at any time in this convention. While they have contended for the left position, there was a left position that wasn't sprung on the convention the last minute, but was sent out in pamphlet to socialists all over the country, and it was a far sounder declaration, from a Marxian standpoint, on war and every other question, than is included in this centrist resolution, and that should have had some opportunity to come before this convention. It was prevented from coming before

## Declaration of Principles

the convention, and was steam-rolled by this centrist group. Nevertheless I desire to cast my vote in favor of the centrist resolution. (Applause.)

Chairman Vladeck: I shall ask the committee of tellers immediately to proceed to count the vote.

The delegate from Washington wishes to explain his vote.

Comrade McKay: I voted yes, nevertheless I want to make it pretty clear to every comrade in this body that there is a difference between resolutions and revolutions. If you please, I have been in jail fifty-one times, and I protest against the steamroller that has been used to push men into a rightist position.

Chairman Vladeck: I wish to tell the delegate that there is plenty of steam, but no roller. (Laughter.)

## STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE OF LAWYERS

Chicago, Illinois  
June 15, 1934

Socialist Party National Executive Committee,  
549 West Randolph Street,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Gentlemen :

You have submitted to us the declaration of principles adopted by the Socialist Party in convention assembled on June 3, 1934. We understand that this declaration is being submitted to the membership by referendum.

After an examination of the statutes and decisions of the United States pertaining to sedition, and of the various states pertaining to criminal syndicalism, anarchy and sabotage, we are of the opinion that at the present time and under the present law the declaration does not violate the law and is not inhibited by any statute.

Fraternally yours,

William A. Cunnea, Chairman  
Leon M. Despres  
Joseph M. Jacobs  
Meyer J. Myer  
John F. Sullivan

By Leon M. Despres,  
Secretary.



## STATEMENT FOR THE MINORITY IN OPPOSITION TO THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

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As a statement of basic principles, the document is inadequate and confused. Approval of its closing paragraphs would end our normal political activity and turn our party into an underground organization. Space permits bare mention of its worst features.

Existing democracy, incomplete though it be, is immensely valuable to the workers, through whose struggles it has been won. Let communists and fascists call it "bogus". Our duty is to defend and perfect it.

The pledge to support any "comrade" coming into conflict with the law by any anti-war activity invites fanatics and provocators to join the party and involve it in responsibility for acts inconsistent with socialist principles. It is also an incitement to unlawful acts. Such incitement is itself a crime, for which courts could hold every party member liable.

The threat to establish minority government when capitalism "collapses" is ambiguous; many hold that capitalism has already collapsed. It is dangerous, because it challenges the majority to crush the party before it gains strength, and because membership in an organization avowing illegal purposes is in several states a penal offense.

Defeat this document, and thus retain the sound and clear declaration of 1924.

## STATEMENT FOR THE MAJORITY IN DEFENSE OF THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

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We live in a time of obvious and acute world crisis. At no period since 1918 has the menace of new war been so serious. We dare not risk confusion in our ranks when an American emergency arises, nor hope successfully to cope with a well prepared opposition unless we are equally well prepared to act.

The new conditions make a more resolute, aggressive and revolutionary policy imperative for Socialism. The proposed declaration is in line with the development of socialist thought all over the world. The Socialist Party of America cannot lag behind.

From the debate published as a supplement to the American Socialist Quarterly, and from a careful reading of the declaration itself, it can easily be seen that it does not call for illegal action, terroristic acts, or the abandonment of the democratic way. The declaration expresses our faith in political and economic democracy, but recognizes the fact that in countries where democracy really became dangerous for capitalism, it was capitalism itself that abolished it. For this eventuality, socialists must prepare. As to legality, it is the opinion of a group of eminent lawyers that the declaration does not violate the law and is not inhibited by any statute.

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