

World Socialist

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has articles on:

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THE ANGLO-IRISH ACCORD AND IT'S IRRELEVANCE FOR THE WORKING CLASS



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PO Box 1440M Melbourne, Victoria 3001
PO Box 8279, Stirling Street, Perth,
W. Australia
PO Box 2291 Sydney NSW
PO Box 1357 Brisbane, Queensland

AUSTRIA: BUND DEMO- KRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN

Gussriegelstrasse 50, A-1100, Vienna

SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

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BC, V8X 3X8
CP 244, Pointe-aux-Trembles,
Quebec H1B 5K3

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND)

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND

PO Box 1929, Auckland NI

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

PO Box 405, Boston, MA. 02272

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

PREFACE

The present pamphlet is in no way intended as a definitive statement of the World Socialist Party's views on patriotism or nationalism. That is, our refutation and utter rejection of the assertion that patriotic or nationalistic aspirations and ideas can in any way be reconciled with the interests of the working class.

Because it treats of a specific subject - the Anglo-Irish accord - the interests of conciseness dictated that the pamphlet could only touch upon some of the major questions which the twin concepts of patriotism and nationalism bring into focus. It does not, for example, attempt an in-depth analysis of the role of governments, the coercive essence of the state, the use to which the various national assemblies can be put, or the vital question of international conflict and war. Indeed, in relation to such issues, we would be sympathetic to the opinion that the pamphlet possibly raises more questions than it attempts to answer.

We would, however, invite any of our readers desirous of further information on the World Socialist Party's attitude to these issues to contact us (address on back page) and we will be happy to furnish a reply.

INTRODUCTION

The signing of the Anglo-Irish accord and the subsequent elections in Northern Ireland, have once again put the working class in the centre of the political stage. It is us, the workers, who always resolve political struggles and military conflicts, because, ultimately, power resides in our overwhelming numerical strength and our key role in society.

But the political contests, like the wars, are never resolved in our interests - nor could they be - for our interests are never an issue.

In the following pages we speak to the reader as a fellow member of the working class; we offer no flags and no empty slogans, nor do we offer to lead you or to think for you. We think the facts speak for themselves and that any dispassionate assessment of the accord will clearly show that it is not remotely concerned with working class interests, it is, in fact, as the pamphlet demonstrates, a monumental irrelevancy as far as our class interests are concerned.

THE WAY YOU SEE THINGS

'WE ARE DEALING, NOT WITH FACTS, BUT WITH PERCEPTIONS'

(Margaret Thatcher, commenting on the Anglo-Irish Accord)

It would be difficult to find a more contemptuous way of telling the working people of Northern Ireland that the purpose of the Anglo-Irish Accord is to con them about the future. The Accord is concerned 'NOT WITH FACTS' - that is, with the realities of our lives; it is merely concerned with perceptions - that is, the way we see things. This is all the Accord wants to change. It wants working people to SEE things differently. It wants working people who follow Unionism to feel that Northern Ireland's place is more secure within the United Kingdom and it hopes to persuade working people who identify with Irish nationalism that things will change for the better.

The interesting thing about the Accord is that, while it hopes to change the way we see things, it does not deal with why we see them the way we do now. To deal with existing perceptions - which are as remote from the realities of working class life as the proposed new perceptions envisaged in the Accord - would be to expose the fact that

these were thrust on us by the political forefathers of Thatcher, Fitzgerald and the Ulster Unionists. Then as now, the only realities that were at stake were the interests of the ruling class on these islands. The facts, as represented by the realities of working class life, were not an issue. Only our attitudes, the way we see things, is of importance to the politicians and the owning class interests which they serve.

Like Thatcher and Fitzgerald, the Northern Ireland politicians have, also, shown a complete contempt for the working class. On 'both sides', they have assumed that our present perceptions can be relied on to ensure our unqualified support for their attitudes. Not from these quarters the suggestion that we examine the Accord from the point of view of our problems or our interests. They have assumed that our perceptions will make us respond to the slogans, the violent speeches and empty rhetoric like well-trained dogs; too stupid to be reasoned with, unmindful of our own interests; willing to bark, or to bite, on command.

THE BONES OF THE ACCORD

Nor does the Accord say anything to you about your problem as a member of the working class. It does argue that the troubled situation in Northern Ireland has had an effect on employment and that the establishment of peaceful conditions would result in outside capitalists finding

Northern Ireland a more attractive place to invest their money. We shall deal later with these contentions and with the question of whether or not the implementation of the Accord is likely to bring about peaceful conditions. The bones of the Accord, however, and the aspect that concerns politicians, clerics and paramilitaries, who assume your support, are the matters that will have a bearing on the future government of Northern Ireland.

Under the terms of the Accord a permanent ministerial Conference will be established. This will comprise representatives of the Irish and British governments under the joint chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Republic's Minister for External Affairs. This Conference will not have an executive input into government or legislation affecting Northern Ireland; its function will be to discuss or debate matters of mutual concern to the two sovereign governments and the rights to advise those responsible for the government of Northern Ireland on such matters. The British government agrees to give reasonable consideration to the views of the Conference but is under no statutory obligation to implement the decisions of the Conference nor to embody its recommendations either into legislation or interpretation or application of existing laws and practices.

The Accord commences with a re-affirmation of Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom and guarantees, on the authority of both governments, that a change in the

constitutional status of Northern Ireland can only be brought about by a majority of the province's population. On the other hand, it recognises the right of the minority Irish nationalists within Northern Ireland to identify with the aspiration of a united Ireland and to seek the establishment of the same by constitutional means.

The Accord favours the development of a broad-based, 'cross-community' Northern Ireland administration and, should such a devolved administration emerge, the Conference will concede to it such matters within its consultative brief as the new administrative body can agree to deal with. In such circumstances, if a Northern Ireland administration based on accepted cross-community support was to come into being, the matters with which the Ministerial Conference is concerned could be passed over to the new administration when, within that administration there is agreement on its ability to handle such matters. In the event of the Conference assigning all of the matters within its consultative competence in the way described, its role would be ended and it would cease to exist.

REAL PROBLEMS

What do the British and Irish governments hope to achieve? Unquestionably, there are considerations outside the immediate problems affecting Northern Ireland that have an influence on both governments. External pressure, especially from the United States government, aimed at bringing the Republic of

Ireland formally within the Western Alliance is probably one such consideration. More directly important to both governments, however, is the matter of the sheer cost of the continuing conflict together with the de-stabilising effects of ongoing lawlessness in both parts of Ireland.

How do the partners to the Accord see it as a means of ending political violence and what are the prospects for them realising their hopes? To answer these questions we have got to look at the cause of the present conflict; we have got to examine the factors which gave rise to the violence in the first place and look at what, if anything, the implementation of the Accord will do to eliminate these.

Two things are worth looking at here as we examine the circumstances which played a vital part in the beginning of the present troubles and the rise of the Provisional I.R.A. Firstly, in 1956, the then I.R.A. commenced a campaign of violence in the north which was almost exclusively confined to the areas immediately around the border. Its declared aim was the establishment by force of arms of a 32-county Republic. Within a short time, the 'campaign' was reduced to such exercises as felling trees on border roads. The northern Catholics and nationalists largely stood aside from the campaign and, by 1962, the I.R.A. acknowledged this total lack of support and gave up the struggle.

Today the situation is very different. Within Catholic-nationalist areas of Northern

Ireland there is sufficient popular support for the I.R.A. to enable it to carry on a campaign of violence. What has changed? How has the I.R.A. managed to build the degree of support it now enjoys among the working class catholics and nationalists?

The principal difference between the two periods is in the declared purpose of the two campaigns and the working class catholic-nationalists' perception of their interests. In the first instance, the abstract notion of a 32-county Ireland left them unmoved. In the second instance, **the Provisional I.R.A. emerged out of a struggle for 'civil rights', a struggle based on the wholly mistaken idea that their RELIGION and not their CLASS position in society was the cause of their poverty, their unemployment, their slum housing and other miseries.** Unquestionably there was a gross imbalance in these things; the Unionist government DID throw crumbs to protestant workers; crumbs in the form of low-waged employment, 'working class' housing and the right to 'celebrate' their 'good fortune', under the patronage of the notoriously anti-working class Orange Order, as and when they pleased. All enough to maintain the fiction that the Unionist Party looked after workers who were protestants - workers who reciprocated by maintaining the Unionist governments, and the capitalists they served, in a position of undisturbed power.

The reality of the situation was that **both protestants and catholics within the working class faced the misery of general poverty and**

slums while those outside the working class, the people with wealth and property, had no such problems - irrespective of their religion or their politics. Beyond any shadow of doubt, the problems that spawned the Civil Rights Movement and, later, the Provisional I.R.A., were CLASS problems but both these organisations, ably abetted by the Unionist Party, succeeded in reinforcing and hardening the conviction among both catholics and protestants that it was a mere politico-religious matter that could be solved by administrative adjustments or by the retention or changing of constitutional structures.

The simple fact is that the real problems out of which the present conflict arose were the everyday problems of capitalist society superimposed on the legends, fictions and bigotries which landed aristocrats and, later, 19th century capitalists, had devised for the protection of their power and privilege.

FACTS OF LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

As we have said, the issues of poverty and its associated miseries, are part and parcel of any normal capitalist society. These are the real problems that afflict the working class wherever capitalism exists - and it exists throughout the world today in one form or another. This is the 'normality' within which politicians, political parties and so-called 'freedom fighters' exist and the background against which they ply their political wares. **Since they accept this**

'normality' and have no wish to change the economic system that gives rise to it, they must endeavour to change our perception of it. They must blame the working class problems on some other cause and, if necessary, fabricate fictions and prejudices for this purpose. Racism, religious and political prejudice and patriotism are common devices for concealing from us the source of our working class problems and Irish history, in its various versions, is a gift to these agents of deception.

The Accord, too, tries to deceive us. Not in the way that the local politicians who are trying to raise temperatures with talk of a 'sell-out' of the Unionist or the nationalist positions say. **Indeed, if the brains of these people were half as active as their mouths, they would realise that a sale requires a buyer and that Northern Ireland, an economic liability and a political embarrassment to Britain, would not be seen as a bargain by the grasping capitalists of the Irish Republic.** Where the Accord attempts to deceive the working class is in its bid to deal with our perceptions of our problems, with the shadows cast by the entrenched social and economic deprivation that exists in Northern Ireland, rather than with the substance of the problem.

As a member of the working class, unless you have an exceptional job, your wages will be substantially below the prevailing average in the rest of the United Kingdom - in fact you will be among the lowest paid workers in western Europe.

Possibly you are unemployed; more than one in five of the work force in Northern Ireland are without a job. Unemployment, currently at record levels, has always been high in the province and this has not only had a depressing effect on wages and living standards generally but has, also, been a factor in promoting both the reality and the illusion of religious discrimination in employment. Frequently Unionist politicians - including some who later became 'impartial' judges - have openly advocated the mean 'favour' of poorly paid employment for protestant members of the working class in order to maintain the fiction that they were their protectors.

Nearly one in every two of the working class population of Northern Ireland is dependent, wholly or partially, on social security payments in order to live.

These, the real problems of life that affect you directly or indirectly, find no mention in the Accord - an Agreement which purports to establish structures for dealing with Northern Ireland's problems!

HISTORICAL FICTIONS

Despite the poverty and social deprivation that exists here, there is one area where we are rich far beyond that existing in most other countries. Parades, demonstrations, marches and church services with a political flavour absolutely abound! Over two thousand such events occur each year, organised by Orange Lodges and by various other protestant

and catholic organisations as celebrations! We, and our class, are well provided for in putting aside our miseries, our low-paid job, our life-style on the dole, our slum, our utter inability to live as we would wish; we are given limitless opportunities to celebrate many and varied historical events which the politicians, the clerics and the paramilitary leaders assure us protected or defended our 'cultural identity' or our 'freedom'!

If it was not all so tragic, it would be hilariously funny. But the sight of working people marching in ranks behind a Union Jack or an Irish tricolour, listening to some vicious politician telling them to stay divided and separated, and to let flags, banners, slogans and the fabricated fictions of historical events take precedence over the reality of poverty and deprivation that restricts and damages their lives must be tragic beyond belief!

The Accord does not try to expose these lunacies. Given that Thatcher and Fitzgerald serve the same capitalist interest that helped to fabricate and promote the fictions, it would be naive to expect them to try. Now that the ignorance and bigotry activated by a divided capitalist class in Ireland in the latter part of the last century* has become an encumbrance, the political servants of present-day capitalism are anxious to dispose of them. But they cannot do so by drawing

*See Ireland - Past, Present and Future available from the World Socialist Party.

your attention to the social realities that underlie division and conflict because those social realities are a normal feature of capitalism.

The Accord deals only with the shadow and not the substance of the 'Northern Ireland problem'. It is almost exclusively concerned with the myths that the politicians on all sides have conjured up to disguise the role of capitalism in our problems. If we keep the myths and the bigotry without attacking property and requiring hundreds of millions of pounds in 'security' to keep us apart, the Accord's authors would be well satisfied. But, against the background of Irish history, one would have to be a supreme optimist to believe that - given the continued competition for jobs, for promotions, for housing, even for dignity itself, in a divided community - conflict will not surface along traditional lines.

But, you might object, what about the argument offered in favour of the Accord that holds out the promise of an influx of 'foreign' capital? Is this not aimed at the very problems that we are contending to be the material basis for conflict? Would not a massive investment programme at least raise the level of poverty of newly-employed workers and, thus, ease community tensions?

As Socialists we argue that the problems of the working class are bound up with the fact that our only access to the fulfilment of our needs and desires is through our ability to work for a wage. Having said that, it would

be nonsense not to recognise that an increase in the number of jobs would cushion some workers from the worst excesses of poverty. But, even if we adopted the contradictory position of accepting that conflict could be abolished while its cause remains, what grounds are there for believing that peace will attract investment?

MONEY FROM AMERICA

The argument runs that the troubles here have discouraged foreign investment and that now, in order to help stimulate peace and harmony in Northern Ireland, well-meaning American capitalists will pour millions of dollars into local industry.

Of the many jokes we hear about 'money from America' this one is by far the funniest - or the sickest. In the first instance, there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever to prove that any of the major multinational or American companies that withdrew from the Province did so for any reason other than the fact that sales of their products had slumped on the world market and the enterprise was no longer profitable. Where this was not the case, where sufficient profits remained to be wrung from the labour of the workforce, 'foreign' capital has not been driven out by the troubles - indeed, in some of the most troubled areas of Northern Ireland, a few multinational companies have invested heavily in the expansion of their operations.

In point of fact, the level of violence here, though it is politically inspired, is

frequently lower than what exists within the normal 'peaceful' conditions in which multinational companies exist in other areas. Most of the big companies that have withdrawn from Northern Ireland were involved in the synthetic fibre industry and they have closed plant, not only here but in many other countries, in the face of low-cost production from the so-called Third World countries. Frequently, that 'competition' has been established by the very concerns that were withdrawing from here. The industries concerned are usually labour intensive requiring a large workforce, and if the low-waged economies of the 'Third World' offer the capitalists an opportunity to cut costs and make more profits, then the plight of the communities that they abandon weighs not at all with them.

PROFIT IMPERATIVE

Could anything be more offensively ridiculous than the suggestion that American companies will invest here as a gesture of goodwill or for the purpose of helping to reduce the social miseries that underly Northern Ireland's political problems? The essential point of all capital investment is profit. If such considerations as goodwill for, and concern with, the problems of ordinary people were allowed to enter the investment equation of any capitalist enterprise to the detriment of maximum profit, the shareholders would not be long in withdrawing their money and the company would go into liquidation. The viciousness of capitalist competition and the lunacy of its betting shop economics brings

misery to workers every single day as the needs of the profit imperative cause closures and pay-offs. If capital had a 'conscience' it would be overworked dealing with the miseries it causes in its country of origin.

If American, or any other, capital finds its way into Northern Ireland it will do so regardless of the Accord. Its primary consideration will be its profit priorities. If there is a general up-swing in the world economy, if Northern Ireland offers a suitable location for low-cost (low-waged) production and reasonable access to markets, if a substantial part of the capital cost of setting up plant is met by government through grants or tax concessions, then 'foreign' investment may become available. To suggest, as the Irish government has suggested and the British government has implied, that the profit-hungry gangsters who control international investment may be persuaded to come here out of concern for the peace and prosperity of the socially-deprived people of Northern Ireland is a monstrous lie. It is a lie in keeping with the entire purpose of the Accord - which is the use of illusion and deceit to end the violence which the propertied class in Ireland originated long ago with the same devices.

It might be argued that the U.S. government, as the national agent of U.S. capitalism, might be prepared to direct capital into Ireland in order to secure its strategic interests in the event of a war with the state-capitalist Russian empire. In other words, we might be able to get some

short-term advantage in employment by allowing ourselves to become an integral part of the U.S. war machine. There are many reasons for questioning the necessity of the U.S. government having to direct investment here for such a purpose, but, even if it did, its primary objective would be the profit interests, and the politico-economic interests, of U.S. capitalism. The interests of working people in this country would be of no concern whatsoever.

The seriously increased danger to the people in Ireland of such close association with American war preparations is not, of course, mentioned by the supporters of the Accord as part of the price we would have to pay for U.S. help.

Nowhere throughout the world has such 'help' - from either the Western or the Eastern Blocs - proved beneficial to working people. Indeed, in many 'Third World' countries, U.S. 'aid' programmes, while they have brought advantages to local capitalists, have very considerably worsened the poverty of the poor and increased the danger to their lives.

If we have demonstrated to you, the reader, that the Accord is a monumental irrelevancy as far as you and your class are concerned, then our evidence not only indicts the London and Dublin governments: it must, also, place all those politicians in Northern Ireland whose viciousness and threats are directed at the Accord, in your contempt. The Accord gives you nothing and you have nothing but your illusions to be taken from you. It

is the loss of these illusions that the politicians and the paramilitarists most fear for without those illusions you are brought face-to-face with the fact that your real problem is capitalism and the way-of-life that that system imposes on you.

IRELAND NOT UNIQUE

The question which we, as members of the working class, have to ask ourselves is which is more important, the poverty and insecurity of our working class lives, or the old bigotries, based on lies and fictions, that separate and divide us. Here we must put that question to you, the reader: if you think it is more important to establish decent lives for ourselves and our families, then it is our task, to examine why life is as it is for us now and what changes are necessary to end the burden of our poverty and lay the foundation for our future happiness and well-being.

When we set about such an examination, when we set aside the political fictions that blinker us from the realities of the world we live in, the first thing we observe is that we as working people in Ireland are not unique; our lives and our life-style are fairly similar to, and in many respects identical with, those of the working class throughout the world.

World-wide it is our class which bears the burden of producing wealth. It is members of our class who originate the ideas and productive techniques; it is members of our

class who design and build and produce all wealth; it is members of our class who distribute that wealth and carry out all the functions of servicing society from top to bottom.

But, though we produce all wealth, we do not produce it for ourselves. We produce it for a relatively small class of capitalists who own and control not only the nature-given resources of the world but the instruments and tools for producing wealth - instruments and tools which were fashioned by the brain and brawn of our class. The history of how the capitalist class came into possession of the earth's wealth is too complex to examine here; suffice it to say that the history of ownership was written in blood; that the present group of owner-parasites have been enabled, through our ignorance, to fashion forms of government and legal enactments that enshrine THEIR RIGHT to own the means whereby we live and OUR OBLIGATION to surrender to them all the wealth we produce. To keep us functioning in the role of wealth producers we are paid a wage or salary which enables us, as a class, to buy back from the owners a fraction of what we produce.

CLASS CONTROL

Effectively, the class that exercises ownership and control (either 'privately' or, as in so-called communist countries, through the medium of the State) over our means of life dominate us in every way. It controls our education and our access to information and is, thus, able to shape our values, our

beliefs, our ideas and our acceptance of poverty as 'normal' and 'natural' and as something beyond our capacity to control. Hence, in a world of potential abundance, we accept as 'normal' the death from starvation of millions of people every year because they do not have the money to buy the food which could be made available - and is frequently destroyed because it cannot be sold. We accept unemployment, despite the fact that great need exists among us for the things the unemployed could produce. We accept slums and 'working class' housing; we accept the crime and the violence that our social ills breed and we accept the patriotic calls our masters make on us to slaughter one another when the segment of national capitalism within which we live is in conflict with a rival.

Not only do we accept these things but we are sufficiently under the domination of capitalism to actually vote at elections for their continuation and our notion of freedom is our right to change the identity of the hired prostitutes that politically administer this madness on behalf of our masters.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The question remains, having identified the nature and cause of our problems, what can we do about them? Is there an alternative to capitalism that will solve our problems and enable us to live free and happy lives?

If we, the working class decide to abolish the right of the capitalist class to own and control the means whereby we live, there is

no power in the world that can stop us. **Today, in most developed countries of world capitalism the working class has the power to bring about this revolutionary act through the medium of the ballot box and, if it exercised this right to do so in such countries, the remaining structures of capitalism could not continue to exist.**

If we abolish world capitalism and its system of class ownership and production for profit, what do we put in its place? **The obvious alternative must be a system of common ownership and production to meet our own self-determined needs; the system we call Socialism.**

In a Socialist society the sole purpose behind the production and distribution of all wealth would be the satisfaction of human needs. Everyone would stand in equal relationship to society's resources for producing wealth and, since all would co-operate in the production and distribution of all the goods and services that society needs, all would have free and equal access to the means of satisfying their own particular needs and requirements. There would be no need for money - the function of which, in capitalist society, is to curtail consumption by the producing class to a fraction of what it produces. **Socialism will be a world-wide classless, moneyless and wageless society based on common ownership and production for use.**

Is Socialism a feasible proposition and, if so, when could it be established? From the

point of view of humanity's ability to produce enough of all the things it requires in such abundance as to allow all to freely avail of what they need, there can be no argument: Capitalism has long ago developed the productive techniques to allow for the abolition of the market and the establishment of free access. When we consider, too, how the ending of a market economy will free millions of workers presently engaged in functions solely connected with capitalism and the defence of property, from bankers to civil servants, we get some appreciation of the vastly increased numbers of people that would be available in Socialism for the task of adequately providing for society's needs.

WHEN?

As to when Socialism can be established, the simple answer is, as soon as a majority of the working class want it. That means as soon as members of the working class throw off the idea that there is nothing they can do about their problems. For you, the reader, it means taking a conscious decision to investigate fully the case for Socialism NOW!

The capitalist class and their political flunkeys, like Thatcher and Fitzgerald, do not make plans, agreements or Accords in the interests of working people - nor could they. Neither do the unionist, nationalist, or paramilitary leaders oppose them because working class interests are not involved. **We repeat that the sole purpose behind the Anglo-Irish Accord is to simplify and cheapen**

the security burden of the capitalist class; to create illusions about individual dignity and 'cultural identity' that might lower the tribal temperature and allow our masters the most economic 'law and order' they require to facilitate their exploitation of us.

The politicians who oppose the Accord do so only because it is a threat to their power and authority over you. Patently, like Thatcher and Fitzgerald, they have no answer to the real social problems that determine the quality of our working class lives.

We, too, are anxious to see an end to the ignorance and bigotry that divides working people and sets them at one another's throats. But, ignorance, bigotry and violence are as much ongoing features of capitalism as are poverty, insecurity and war. All will remain with us to cripple and demean our lives until we take the conscious decision to abolish capitalism and establish a sane system of society.

THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT holds:

That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of the world to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.