

SOCIALIST PARTY USA

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK



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(Bill Douglas prepared the first version of this handbook while serving 6 months at Leavenworth for non-violent direct action at the Strategic Air Command Base)

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Due to America's restrictive and often undemocratic ballot access laws (which have made it almost impossible to break the two-party monopoly on national politics), the party views the races primarily as opportunities for educating the public about socialism and the need for electoral democracy in the U.S.

In 1976, the Socialist Party USA ran a presidential campaign for the first time in 20 years; the candidates were Frank P. Zeidler, former Mayor of Milwaukee, for President and J. Quinn Brisben, a Chicago school teacher, for Vice President. In 1980 the Socialist ticket was David McReynolds, a pacifist on the staff of the War Resisters League, and Sister Diane Drufenbrock of the Order of St. Francis.

One outcome of that campaign was the Party's recognition by the Federal Election Committee as a political party nationwide in scope. In 1984 there was an ill-fated attempt to form a coalition with the Citizen's Party. From 1988-2008 the SP ran presidential candidates, the latest being Brian Moore.

Due in part to frustration with the free-trade and anti-labor successes of Democratic President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the end of the Cold War and the advent of the Internet, the last years of the 20th century saw an influx of newer, younger members. This wave of new activists brought the party to a size and level of activity not seen for decades.

The Socialist Party's contributions in the areas of peace, civil rights, local government, and labor form a legacy that SP members can be proud of and bear a responsibility to continue.

participant in the founding of the CIO and other struggles. The multiracial organizing of poor Southerners in the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union was an SP-initiated activity during those years. It was one of the SP's solutions to the economic crisis, as well as the establishment of what there was of a welfare state in this country.

The SP leadership was leery of the U.S. slide toward WWII, correctly foreseeing the emergence of a warfare state in this country. But when war came, the Party as a whole gave it critical support because of the danger of fascism. Some Party members continued to oppose all wars as manifestations of the capitalist system and spent time in prison for their refusal to cooperate. Since Party support of the war came with reservations – unlike the unqualified support of the CP after the Soviet Union's entry into the war – Socialists were instrumental, if lonely, in pointing out some of the abuses the war made possible: the internment of Japanese-Americans in concentration camps, the advantages capitalists took of no-strike pledges, and the Allies' demand for unconditional surrender, which made it possible for the first use of atomic weapons, to name a few.

Socialist Party members came early to struggle for civil rights that dominated the national agenda in the early 1960s. SP member and black union leader A. Phillip Randolph agreed to call a mass march on Washington during WWII only after the federal government agreed to concessions in its segregation policies. SP members were active in the early Freedom Rides and the founding of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

After the 1956 Elections, the majority of the party began to favor a “realignment” strategy of working within the Democratic Party. The Debs Caucus advocated continuing to run Socialists for office. During the war in Indo-China, the Debs caucus was the only group within the party that favored unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam. Due to these differences, a three-way split developed in the old SP in the early 70's, with the Debs Caucus reclaiming the name Socialist Party. The right wing Social Democrats, who by then were in the majority, renamed their organization “Social Democrats USA”. The other split-off was a centrist group that became the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (now called the Democratic Socialists of America).

Since 1973, the Socialist Party USA has focused its attention more on grassroots and local politics, and has dealt with the controversial issue of presidential politics on a case-by-case basis.

What The Socialist Party Believes

The SP believes in political democracy and defines itself as a democratic socialist organization. This means that we are committed to the democratic process and its extension to the economy.

Socialists have also been in the forefront of those supporting civil liberties for all, for two reasons: we recognize that if unpopular views are allowed to be quashed, those in power use those laws against those who threaten the status quo (of which Socialists will be high on the list), and that civil liberties are necessary for a functioning democracy. Choices can't be made adequately if not all views are allowed to be aired.

Political democracy also involves secularism, or the separation of church and state. Socialists believe that people should be free to believe whatever religious doctrines to which their consciences lead them or to not believe in the supernatural, without state interference, and, likewise, that no religion has a right to special preference by the state.

We also apply our principles of economic democracy to other countries that call themselves socialist. If they have tried to enforce equality at the expense of political democracy, we disagree with attaching the label “socialist” to them. Indeed, it is a contradiction to speak of “enforcing equality,” as that implies that someone who is “more equal” is doing the enforcing.

We may disagree amongst ourselves as to how to designate the previous Communist Party: whether bureaucratic, collectivist, state capitalist, a class society or another type of controlled state. In our foreign policy we withhold support for such governments, as we do for capitalist governments.

For further reading:

Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*

Howard Zinn, *Disobedience and Democracy*

Economic Democracy

As socialists, we believe that political democracy alone does not go far enough. In fact, with great inequalities of wealth, political democracy itself is threatened and sometimes negated. As Supreme

Court Justice Louis Brandeis put it, “we can have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth in a few hands, but we can’t have both.”

Many of the fundamental decisions that affect us everyday are made not by representatives chosen at the ballot box but by executives in corporate boardrooms who are answerable to no one except capital. Workers should not be contributing their labor to the domination of capital but to their own collective benefit.

Concretely, this means:

1. Public ownership of (at least) the commanding heights of the economy. One example we have currently is that of public electric power, which has consistently been cheaper than electricity produced by investor-owned utilities (IOUs). These economic sectors should be democratically controlled by the communities they serve.
2. Joint worker-consumer control of the economy. This does not mean a takeover of small business and family farms. Our goal is worker-consumer ownership and control. The family farm is an example of worker ownership in the present economy, but control is in the hands of food corporations and banks, who establish prices and credit and often drive small farmers off their land. In our modern, post-industrial society, we will also need to find ways of realizing democratic control of the means of communication.

The embryos of some of the institutions that would form a socialist economy already exist in today's economy. Such places as producer co-ops, consumer co-ops, and worker collectives provide suggestions and experiments on how a socialist economy might work on a larger scale. The multi-industry Mondragon Cooperative, for example, is a major factor in the economy of the Basque region of Spain.

For further Reading:

George Lichteim, *A Short History of Socialism*

Mihailo Markovic, *Democratic Socialism*

John Case & Rosemary C.R. Taylor, *Co-Ops, Communes and Collectives*

Andre Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*

Capitalist enterprises alienate workers from their work in several ways. One way is the production of goods for profit, not use. This leads to the production of useless goods, followed by a psychological

communication with Party Locals. Socialist members of Congress were denied their seats, even after special elections returned them to Congress. By the end of the war, practically the entire leadership of the SP was in prison or indicted. In May of 1918, Debs gave an anti-war speech in Canton, Ohio for which he was found guilty of violating the Espionage Act and sentenced to 10 years in Atlanta Federal Prison. His statement at sentencing sums up his humanitarian philosophy and his courage: “While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”

Debs again received a million votes for president in 1920 with the slogan “Vote for Convict #9653.” But the war hysteria continued after the war, with Palmer Red scare raids resulting in the deportation of hundreds of immigrant radicals.

The other factor in the decline of the SP was the three-way split in 1920, resulting in the formation of the pro-Bolshevik Communist Party and Communist Labor Party. No faction distinguished itself with its democracy or charity during the split. But the basic question was the attitude toward the Russian Revolution, and the SP faction, while still sympathetic to what was going on in Russia, refused to subordinate its politics to that of the Bolsheviks.

When Debs was pardoned by Warren Harding and released from prison for Christmas in 1921, his poor health reflected the poor health of the party. The boom times of the 1920's and the now-ingrained anti-red fear in the U.S. culture were not fertile ground for rebuilding. In 1920 the SP endorsed the Progressive Party candidacy of Robert LaFollette for president, as did the American Federation of Labor, in a departure from its non-political traditions. While the SP worked hard to establish a permanent labor party from this campaign, the AFL refused to commit itself on this point and in fact did not participate after the election. In 1928 the SP returned to running its own candidate, this time Norman Thomas, a Presbyterian minister who had joined the party because of his opposition to WWI. Thomas ran for president on the Socialist ticket six times, in 1932 rivaling Deb's vote totals.

The stock market crash of 1929 put an end (at least for 20 years) to the capitalist myth of unending prosperity, and SP fortunes began to revive. (SP vice-presidential candidate Quinn Brisben has compared Party fortunes to those of pawnshops.) While in some ways the CP dominated the left of the 1930's, the SP was an active and vibrant

profits. Not unexpectedly, workers suffered. While Debs and other ARU leaders were uncertain as to whether they could help, rank and file enthusiasm pushed through a plank demanding a boycott of all trains carrying Pullman cars.

The federal government, under Democrat Grover Cleveland, responded by attaching a mail car to all trains, bringing in federal troops to insure the mail got through, and issuing an injunction against the leadership of the ARU. With such power the strike and boycott were broken, and Debs was sentenced to jail in Woodstock, Illinois for violating the injunction. While there, he read Marx and became a convinced Socialist. His Social Democracy of America, which in its first years would plan utopian experiments in the American West, in 1900 merged with a non-doctrinaire split from the SLP to form the Socialist Party of America.

Within the decade, the SP became a mass party. It allowed a diversity of opinion and experience that let Oklahoma farmers share a common vision with New York City's Eastern European immigrants. The Party was strongest in middle-sized industrial cities in the Midwest. In 1912, Debs received a million votes for president, 6% of the vote. More importantly, over 1200 local Socialist officeholders were elected that year. The "Sewer Socialists" of Milwaukee, so called because of their experience with public works, were not only the most entrenched Socialists, but also the longest lasting, with fifty years of mostly Socialist administrations, ending when Frank Zeidler retired as mayor in 1960. The Non-Partisan League of North Dakota, a spin-off of the SP which operated inside the Republican Party, controlled that state's government for two years and inaugurated such long-lasting changes as a state-owned bank.

Two factors halted the growth of the SP: the outbreak of WWI and a split over attitudes toward the Bolshevik takeover of the Russian Revolution. In 1916 the SP campaigned on a platform demanding a referendum before any declaration of war but did poorly against Woodrow "He kept us out of the war" Wilson. When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, the Socialist Party of America became one of the few member parties of the Second International to condemn participation in the war, at a special St. Louis Convention. Many pro-war Party members resigned.

But more than these withdrawals were the all-out assault by the government on the civil liberties of Socialists and IWW members. The SP was denied second-class postage rate, which hamstrung

manipulation of the public in order to create a "need" through advertising. Production without regard to the consequences leads to environmental despoliation and arms races between nations.

Two examples of production for profit, not need, in the current system are:

1. The failures of drug companies to develop or manufacture "orphan drugs" – drugs that treat diseases so rare that there is no profit in their production. Even though drug companies have the highest rate of profit of U.S. industry, the Reagan administration had to sign a bill giving a tax break to drug companies before they would agree to make such drugs. (And the companies still opposed the legislation!)
2. The disappearance of trolley cars. Trolleys in an age of energy shortages could be a cheap, clean, energy-efficient way of moving people around our larger cities. We don't have trolley cars in most U.S. cities today because during the late 1940's and early 1950's, General Motors bought up the trolley car companies, not to run them more efficiently, but to tear up the tracks so they wouldn't compete with GM cars and buses.

A socialist economy would be based on production for use, not "what makes the most profit" but "what do we need?" This would be possible because the people making decisions would not be a few rich executives in corporate boardrooms but representatives of society as a whole.

An economy based not on competition but on human need would be able to plan how to prevent the crises inherent to the capitalist system. Frederick Engels in "Outline of a Critique of Political Economy" put it this way:

The law of competition is that demand and supply always strive to complement each other, and therefore never do so.... If demand is greater than supply, the price rises and, as a result, supply is to a certain degree stimulated. As soon as it comes to the market, prices fall; and if it becomes greater than demand, then the fall in prices are so significant that demand is once again stimulated. So it goes on unending – a perpetually unhealthy state of affairs.... The economist comes along with his lovely theory of demand and supply, proves to you that "one can never produce too much," and practice replies with trade crises, which reappear a regularly as the comets.

A socialist economy could plan collectively and democratically how much of whatever needs to be produced. There is disagreement among Socialists as to how centralized this would be. Some Socialists still see a place for a market, as was present in the decentralized self-management collectives in Yugoslavia.

The ultimate goal of socialism is to create a classless society, with no rich and no poor. Everyone will have equivalent relationships to the means of production. This doesn't mean absolute equality – there may be pay differentials based on need and type of job. But everyone's fundamental needs will be met, and no one will get rich at the expense of others. Society will be structured along the line of the old slogan by Louis Blanc, "From each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her needs."

For this goal to be reached, a new ethics will have to be cultivated, in which cooperation replaces competition and conflict. Some people will object to this as "contrary to human nature." Many Socialists (and anthropologists) believe that human nature is not set in stone, but rather that it is a product of our environment. As Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, put it, "We want a society where it is easier for people to be good." Even if we were to accept that humans are evil by nature, is this a reason for society to cater to such instincts? This seems an argument for murder, rape, and slavery as much as for competition or war. But we need not deny self-interest in advocating cooperation. We need to equate self-interest with class interest and ultimately our survival!

In doing so, we will need to identify what Marx called "false consciousness" – the tendency of the working class to mistakenly identify its interests with the interests of its rulers, and the widespread belief that "anyone can get ahead in this society." In fact, the odds are four to one that you will die in the same social class in which you were born.

For further Reading:

John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*

Bob Howard & Jon Logue, eds, *American Class Society in Numbers*

Working Class Unity

If we are to achieve such goals as a classless society and a society based on cooperation, we will need the unity of all working and oppressed people. That means we need to recognize and overcome

Jeffersonian tradition that bore the seeds of future movements for social justice. Such anomalies as the Kentucky legislature coming within votes of outlawing private property are examples of the extreme forms such egalitarianism could take even legislatively. The abolitionist movement is an outstanding example of an American radical movement that eventually became successful when the Thirteenth Amendment outlawed slavery (except in prisons).

The Civil War ended slavery and also resulted in reorganizing the ruling class, with power shifting from the Southern plantation owner to the new northern industrial capitalist. A few of the abolitionists, such as Wendell Phillips, realized this. The labor uprising of 1877 was the first of a long series of attempts at redressing the consequences of this new rule for working people. Parallel to these upsurges were a series of radical agrarian movements: the Farmers Alliance, the Greenback Party, and the Populist or People's Party. The International Workingmen's Party and the Socialist Labor Party were the earliest attempts at explicit socialist organizing.

The young labor movement characterized by the utopian Knights of Labor and the newer, more economically oriented American Federation of Labor reached a crisis in 1886 in organizing for the eight-hour workday. In Chicago, much of the leadership of this struggle was anarchist, representing both native and immigrant strains. May Day strikes were peaceful, but on May 3rd a peaceful rally protesting police brutality ended in violence when someone (the courts never bothered to determine who) threw a bomb, killing several policemen. The anarchist leadership of the eight-hour day movement was arrested, tried, and convicted of the bomb throwing on the dubious ground that they were responsible for everything that occurred at the strike.

Debs was a railroad worker from Terre Haute, Indiana, a second-generation American of French parents. His persistent attempts to reorganize a union along craft lines met with failure, as the railroad companies were able to play off one rail brotherhood against another, breaking all strikes. In 1893, Debs led the effort to form an industrial union, the American Railway Union.

Holding a founding convention in Chicago in 1894, the ARU was met with a plea for help from striking Pullman Car workers who lived just south of Chicago in Pullman. George Pullman had attempted to set up a model company town under his autocratic leadership, but the depression forced him to choose between that and maintaining

disobedience. The SP is committed to participating in both electoral and direct action.

Participation in labor struggles is an essential aspect of direct action. Every Party member eligible for membership in a labor union is encouraged to join and be active. In unorganized workplaces, Party members are encouraged to be involved in organizing. Party members are also encouraged to participate in rank and file caucuses to democratize their union.

As Party members and as locals, we can be active in strike and boycott support work. Often, fundraising is needed to supplement strike pay, or volunteer picketers are welcome. The Texas Labor Fund was set up by the SP of Texas to aid needy unions. Another SP local has monitored strike coverage by the media to check for bias and errors. Locals can also engage in labor and labor history.

Publications that are available from the SP National Office which may be useful in your organizing include our current Platform, the Constitution of the SP, a reading list, a list of commissions in the Party, and a publication and publisher's list.

The National Office also maintains a computerized mailing list, which can be used in some circumstances to help with your organizing. Anytime you make contact with someone interested in the Party, you are encouraged to send their name and address to the National Office.

Socialist Party History

U.S. leftists have often been accused of lacking a sense of history. Affiliation with the SP and knowledge of U.S. radical history should help us to keep from repeating past mistakes. Acquaintance with the rich tradition of American Socialism, something most of us never learned about in high school, also helps to situate us as American, albeit in opposition to mainstream politics, and is thus part of our construction of an alternative American culture.

This nation was founded in revolution. Primitive communitarian societies existed before the Europeans invaded. Many of these Europeans were themselves among the most radical of their age. While the American Revolution was on balance a bourgeois revolution, it also resulted in establishing a limited egalitarian

those divisions in our society which serve to prop up the status quo. The class in power uses such divisions to blind us to the fundamental class division in our society, and to play one group off against another. Socialists believe that such fundamental social problems have economic roots that can be solved only within the framework of a new economic system. But we are also coming to see that this is a necessary but not a sufficient solution – that racism and sexism will not automatically disappear in a socialist society but will have to be struggled against with the same determination as is necessary in the struggle against capitalism.

Racism is an integral party of U.S. society as presently constructed. One need only compare the unemployment rate or wage scale for African American and other minorities to those of whites. Racism provides an excuse and a scapegoat to whites who are unwilling or unable to see that the real causes of their problems lie in the economic structure. Racism also fosters attitudes that make it easier for leaders to wage war.

Similarly, sexism has economic roots. The fact that a woman makes 65 cents for every dollar that a man makes is evidence of this. The traditional role of women in society can be explained in terms of economic dependence on men. Women's liberation seeks to overcome the discrimination women face. It also involves a new way of looking at society (see Socialist Feminism below).

Socialists also oppose discrimination against lesbian and gay people. There is disagreement among Socialists whether this involves subscribing to a theory of gay liberation – that is a fundamental way of looking at society – or whether it is a matter of civil liberties. See *the SPUSA Platform and Statement of Principles*.

Capitalism also disadvantages older people. For a variety of reasons including mass media advertising, our culture values youth. Socialists are intergenerational in our organizing, and defend programs such as Social Security which the Socialist Party fought to establish.

Similarly, we ought to be conscious in our organizing of the needs of disabled people and oppose discrimination against them.

For further Reading:

Diane Balser, *Sisterhood and Solidarity*

Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*

SPUSA Lesbian & Gay Work Group, *Democratic Socialism and Lesbian & Gay Liberation*

Class Consciousness

Socialists are in the forefront of labor struggles because we see the importance of the working class in achieving fundamental change, and the history role of labor in achieving domestic reform. Socialists have definite ideas about what will make an effective labor movement. But there can be no doubt that working conditions of working people both organized and unorganized have been much improved due to labor unions. The following are some fundamentals of a Socialist approach to labor:

1. Defense of bona fide labor unions. Socialists oppose union-busting. We oppose concessions. We see one of the major problems of U.S. labor as its failure to organize the unorganized – less than one fifth of the workforce in the U.S. is under union contract.
2. Union democracy. Much of labor's difficulties are due to internal problems. The labor movement cannot be a force for democratic change until it is democratic itself. The SP approaches change until it is democratic itself. The SP approach to labor supports rank and file insurgent movements built from the bottom up. Some labor leaders are progressive, but they can be really effective in promoting widespread change only if they are there as democratic representatives of a militant and progressive rank and file.
3. Solidarity. We see the solidarity of all workers as the key to building an effective labor movement. The old IWW slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all." Springing from this idea of solidarity is the idea of industrial unionism, as opposed to craft unionism: that all workers of a particular industry be organized together regardless of specific occupation. Eugene Debs, one of the founders of the Socialist Party of the United States of America, recognized from his experience as a railway workers union leader that craft unionism provides an opportunity for employers to play one craft against another. Some socialists would carry this to the conclusion that all workers be organized into "one big union," such as the Industrial Workers of the World. Also stemming from the idea of solidarity is the preference for internationalist to nationalist unions. The theory that the North American working class has been brought off in the post-WWII era, being offered relatively high wages in exchange for the acceptance of the present

SP members with no local in their area are encouraged to form one. Some of the activities listed below will be helpful in forming a local; others will be possible only once a local has been formed.

Recruiting. Locating people who share a socialist outlook is possible only by creating some SP presence in your area and becoming known, at least among the left, as an SP member. This can be as simple as wearing a button or writing a letter to the editor stating the SP perspective on some issue. It might also mean carrying a Party banner or sign in a demonstration, making a donation to a strike fund or a solidarity benefit in the Party's name, arranging a literature table on a college campus or at a local forum, getting a bookstore to carry SP publications, organizing and poster for an SP-sponsored meeting or series of meetings on a specific topic or a general SP orientation, co-sponsoring a speech or other event, leafleting an event with appropriate Party literature (be sure to include a local address and phone number), or taking on a particular issue that needs to be addressed locally as a Party project. You can probably think of other ideas.

Once a presence is established, you need to be ready for responses. In some areas the question, "Which socialist party?" will need to be answered, and the reputation of some left groups for sectarianism or opportunism will need to be overcome. You also need to be ready with some suggestions or ideas about what people can do in a new local or pre-local. Giving new members something to do will also give them more of a commitment to the organization.

A local should also consciously plan outreach to specific groups. If our goal is a multi-racial organization, the only way to achieve that is by making specific overtures to minority group members.

Electoral Activity. The Socialist Party has consistently used electoral activity as a vehicle for educating about socialism. We believe this is best done outside the framework of the two-party system, since both the Democratic and Republican parties are firmly committed to capitalism. This often involves defending the democratic rights of smaller parties as well as promoting and putting into practice the ingredients of a new society.

Direct Action. As Socialists, we believe that democracy means more than elections. Power can only rest in the hands of the people when they are free to debate, protest, boycott, and even participate in civil

party members cannot deviate publicly from the party line. In practice, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” has been the dictatorship of the vanguard party, often under the control of one of a few men. (“Men” is used deliberately; there were women in the lower bodies but not in the Soviet Politburo.)

For further Reading:

Rosa Luxemburg, *Leninism or Marxism?*

Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt*

George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*

Strategies For Transition To Socialism

Some Socialists believe that socialism can be voted in. Other Socialists believe that electoral action serves an important function in educating people about socialism and distinguishing it from capitalist alternatives. Socialists are committed to struggling for what Andre Gorz calls “revolutionary reforms,” i.e. reforms that change the balance of power in the present system toward more strength for the less powerful.

Ultimately, the present system cannot function without the cooperation and support of those oppressed by it. But a rebellion in a few sectors of society can be crushed by a sophisticated ruling class. If cooperation of the working class can be obtained, the country could be shut down and taken over by the working class. This is the strategy outlined by Rosa Luxemburg in *General Strike*.

Establishing and nurturing alternative institutions is another strategy to replace the capitalist system. In all these strategies Socialists recognize the connection between means and ends: that what means we employ will have a determinative effect on the end result. If we want a really democratic society, we will need to foster democracy in our means to achieve it.

Tactics and Organizing

Socialists are involved in a wide variety of activities to promote Socialism and further the cause of empowering the oppressed. All of these activities require organizing.

system, as the expense of workers in Third World countries, helps to explain the lack of international solidarity in U.S. labor. But now the situation is changing. Jobs in the U.S. are being lost to cheaper labor markets overseas, often places where U.S. working people’s tax dollars are being used to prop up right-wing dictatorships that limit or outlaw unions and strikes. Socialists have the job of educating the working class that wars are fought against their own interest – that the working classes of different countries have much more in common with each other than with their rulers.

4. Open promotion of Socialist principles is thus a goal of Socialists within the trade union movement. There are times when the tactics of militant unions make this easier – e.g., it is a short step from the occupation of factories to the idea that workers themselves should own and control the factories. But slow, careful work in non-crisis situation is necessary to prepare for such a situation and makes them possible.

We ought not to leave a discussion of the working class without at least mentioning some problems of definition. Third world revolutions with peasants rather than wage-earners as the motivating force have helped to broaden our perspective on what constitutes a revolutionary class. Some theorists even see Third World countries as occupying approximately the same place as the working class did in Marx’s theory of revolution. More recently, other theorists have reexamined modern capitalist society and seen the emergence of a “professional-managerial” class between capital and labor, but still with wage-earning characteristics.

For further Reading:

Richard Barnett, *Global Reach*

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism*

F. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

SPUSA Labor Work Group, *Revitalize the Labor Movement*

Internationalism

Socialists hope to overcome national divisions that endanger world peace and security by stressing that ordinary people of different countries have more in common with each other than with their leaders. Socialist parties worldwide are committed to international solidarity rather than responsibility to a particular nation.

Ways to foster internationalism include international, democratic control of at least the commanding heights of the international economy, and resources such as the water ways and seabeds while giving local communities control over their own economies. Promotion of world federalism is another socialist goal: a global federation of cooperative commonwealths.

Socialists recognize that nationalism is a powerful force in today's world. Nationalism can have progressive features, when it opposes imperialism or the nuclear domination of the superpowers. But while Socialists recognize the rights of self-determination and the rights of national minorities, we believe that nationalism itself must be transcended.

Socialists oppose international war, for reasons of solidarity and internationalism outlined above. Some Socialists are absolute pacifists, dedicated to living a life of non-violence in all circumstances. The majority of socialists, however, concede that violence may be necessary under circumstances in which lives would ultimately be saved. Debs spoke for those socialists when he said, "I am opposed to all war but one...the worldwide war of social revolution." For this reason (and for reasons concerning civil liberties) Socialists have been in the forefront of opposition to the draft.

The increasing totality of modern warfare has led us to the prospect of the destruction of civilization through nuclear war. Recognizing the pointlessness of this path for humanity, and the fact that there is no defense against nuclear war, the SP calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament and conversion of the war-making economy to peaceful alternatives.

For further Reading:

Mary Marcy, *You Have No Country!*

E.P. Thompson & Dan Smith, eds *Protest and Survive*

Socialist Feminism

During the last decade, Socialists have come to a new realization of non-economic sources of oppression. In large measure the women's movement has brought this about. In the U.S., reaction to women's oppression in the anti-war movement of the 1960's was a major factor in sparking the Women's Liberation Movement (see Sara Evans, *Personal Politics*). Socialist feminism is an attempt to explain the

builds roads and sewers; the state executes, imprisons, and wages war. Gustav Landauer tried in his political writing to reconcile anarchism and socialism.

For further Reading:

Mulford Q. Sibley, *Anarchism, Socialism and Pacifism*

George Woodcock, *Anarchism*

Eclectic Socialism: Many Socialists are primarily activists, not theoreticians, and gladly take what seems useful in different tendencies.

Limits of Democratic Socialism

While there is a wide spectrum of opinion within the Party, it is not unlimited, and the Party reserves the right to exclude those who will not operate democratically.

Liberalism: First of all, liberals have no place in the Party. A liberal is one who accepts the current system while working for improvements on it. Socialists, no matter how gradualist their approach may be, all believe the present economic system must be replaced. David McReynolds, presidential candidate of the SP in both 1980 and 2000, described the difference between liberals and radicals in terms of choice: a liberal, if given the choice of death by fire squad or the gas chamber, will agonize endlessly over which is superior. A radical will try to escape. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the radical will be killed trying to escape, but a hundred times out of a hundred the liberal will die from one of the two choices he or she could not see beyond.

Leninism: In 1920, the Socialist Party in the U.S. split into three groups: the SP, the Communist Party, and the Communist Labor Party.

The SP, while sympathetic to the initial stages of the Russian Revolution, could not accept Moscow's complete domination of the Comintern (the Communist International) and thus was not eligible for membership. Rosa Luxemburg, in "Leninism or Marxism?", criticized the extreme centralism of Lenin's notion, a vanguard party, which would lead the working class. Lenin advocated party discipline that was enforced internally by "democratic centralism," which means

abilities of those parties to move beyond the welfare state to socialism. The answer seems to depend on the country. In 1982, the Swedish SDP was voted back into power with a radical platform of a long-term transition to worker ownership of industry; on the other hand, such parties as the West German SDP seem to be focused on managing capitalism rather than providing alternatives.

For further Reading:

E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*

Councilism: The dichotomy between Leninists and social democrats obscures a third tradition that is being rediscovered. An example of this tradition are the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish Marxist who was revolutionary but critical of the extreme centralism of Lenin's Russian Party. She outlined a theory of transforming society through a general strike. Councilists or council communists hope to bring about a new society through the decentralized function of workers' councils (or soviets in the original meaning of the term, free from party domination.) Such councilists are close to syndicalism, the idea that labor unions will be the basic structure of a new society.

For further Reading:

Cornelius Castoriadas, *Workers' Councils*

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notes*

Anton Pannekoek, *Workers' Councils*

Socialist Humanism: Drawing upon utopian socialists and early Marx, socialist humanists generally emphasize what all of humanity have in common rather than class conflicts. Many socialist humanists have been influenced by the nonviolent theory and action of Gandhi.

For further Reading:

Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man: Socialist Humanism*

Priscilla Long, ed *The New Left*

Anarchism: Anarchists usually separate themselves from democratic socialists by their refusal to use the ballot box as a means of struggle, but democratic socialism has much in common with anarchism. One difference is the emphasis that socialists are less likely to lose sight of social responsibilities at the expense of individual rights. The anarchist conception of the abolition of the state has its parallel in Marx's "withering away of the state." Perhaps common ground can be found in the Italian anarchist Malatesta's distinction between government and its state: government picks up the garbage and

sources of oppression and transform society into a non-patriarchal community. Party member Linda Nelson in the Missouri Valley Socialist defined socialist feminism this way:

The combination of socialism and feminism has created a strong, comprehensive perspective from which to see and move to change the problems of our time. Both are critical ways of looking at the world. They both reveal certain often overlapping inequalities. They aid us in seeing injustice in terms of antagonists. Feminists find subjugation due to the capitalist economic system.... The unique vantage point of socialist feminism allows us to not only work toward a new economic order and political system, but also to appreciate the need for change in the social and culture aspects of life. We seek not just a superficial equality, but a deep-rooted one.

For further Reading:

Sheila Rowbotham, et al. *Beyond the Fragments*

Zillah Eisenstein, *Capitalist Patriarchy*

Pam McAllister, ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life*

Ecology

Another movement that has affected the way many Socialists perceive reality is the environmental movement. Capitalism within its logic of expression has run into the problem of limited resources. At the same time, the environmental movement has called into question the older superficial socialist view that the only thing wrong with industrialism is who controls it. (The somewhat flippant Bolshevik definition of socialism as "soviets plus electrification" is an example of the approach.) But unlimited growth does not have to be the basis for an economy – if the economy is structured not on the basis of profits but of human needs. Marx's concept of reification – of a technology that makes things out of people – can be extended to look at a technology which seems to exist for its own ends, rather than for human ends. In place of this technology, Socialists can offer democratic economic planning, which can have as its criteria environmental soundness and full employment.

For further Reading:

Andre Gorz, *Ecology as Politics*

E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered*

John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*

A Multi-Tendency Organization

The SP describes itself as multi-tendency, with a wide spectrum of opinion and disagreement within its ranks. Perhaps the best way to describe the different tendencies is to take them historically:

Marxist/Class Struggle Socialism: In reaction to utopian socialism, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the turbulent 1840's formulated a class-oriented socialism, based on the premise that the self-liberation of the working class was necessary for and would lead to socialism. The industrialization of Europe had led to the dominance of a new class, the bourgeoisie, who replaced the feudal aristocracy. Wealth replaced inherited privilege in determining who ruled society. Marx and Engels asserted that the proletariat, the wage-earning class that represented the vast majority of humanity (or at least of Europe), must replace the bourgeoisie for true democracy and equality to flourish.

Marx systematically described the workings and failings of capitalism in *Capital* and his other works. While perhaps too optimistic about how short a time it would be before capitalism's demise, he was prescient in predicting the emergence of monopoly capitalism, the economic situation in which we now find ourselves.

In strategizing for revolution, Marx left his followers not a blueprint but a way of looking at history. His view of history is dialectical – history is not static but rather involves the overcoming of contradictions, the conflict of classes, and the relation of those classes to the means of production. Whatever one's reaction to Marxism, it is impossible to be a Socialist today and not be influenced by it in some way.

For further Reading:

Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*

R.C. Tucker, ed *The Marx-Engels Reader*

Religious Socialism: Both Jewish and Christian socialists find ample justification for their politics in the Torah and the Bible respectively. The leveling of society implied in the Year of Jubilee, the call for social justice by the prophets, the communalism of the early church described in Acts, the continuation of this communalism in the founding of religious orders, and the eschatological expectation of a just Kingdom of God all demand of the believer participation in the struggle for a just society. This view is being articulated currently Latin American liberation theologians, but religious socialists have

participated in Socialist movements from the beginning. There are also a number of other spiritual traditions from which Socialists drive their politics, including Native American, African, and ancient matriarchal traditions. Religious socialists may also find themselves in one of the other tendencies.

For further Reading:

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*

Akwesasne Notes, ed. *A Basic Call to Consciousness*

Utopian Socialism: In the early 19th century, various utopian communities were organized. Robert Owen, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier are the best known of these reformers. Owen believed that human nature was infinitely malleable, and all that was needed for better world was the proper environment. He astonished British contemporaries by successfully operating a factory on humanitarian principles. Nineteenth century America was a particularly fertile ground for such experiments, which generally took an evolutionary view of change. Cooperative Socialists today, seeking to "build the new society within the shell of the old," may be seen as descendants of these utopian Socialists.

For further Reading:

Robert Owen, *A New View of Society*

Charles Nordhoff, *The Communist Societies in the U.S.*

Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia*

Social Democracy: By World War I, mass socialist parties existed in most countries in Europe. But the failure of those parties to put solidarity above national interest during the war and the events of the Russian Revolution resulted in a lasting division in the socialist movement. One faction accepted the leadership of the successful Bolsheviks in Moscow, formed Communist Parties, and accepted the Leninist approach to party-building (see Leninism below); the other faction continued as social democratic parties, generally following Edward Bernstein's revision of Marxism to make it evolutionary and gradualist.

The social democratic parties of Western Europe are generally responsible for constructing the welfare state, which provides more security and benefits for the average citizen than the liberals of the U.S. dare to propose. Many Socialists have questions about the