

To the Prospective Member of the Socialist Labor Party

In evaluating an application for membership, there are two considerations to which the Socialist Labor Party gives high priority.

One is that the Party be convinced that the applicant has a clear understanding of the SLP's primary principles, a conscious realization of the SLP's goal and a general conception of its program for achieving that goal.

The other is that it be clearly established that the applicant and the Party want the same thing and basically for the same reasons.

These considerations should be of equal importance to the applicant for membership. For unless the applicant and the Party have these things in common there is no point to their joining forces. The Party knows from many years of experience that only those members stick who know what they are getting into before they join. Those who do not know what they are getting into, sooner or later, drop out, either because of frustration, disillusionment or other emotional and/or intellectual conflicts.

That is why the Socialist Labor Party—despite its desire for a growing membership—never resorts to pressure tactics. Instead, it stresses to potential members the importance of acquiring a knowledge of the SLP's fundamental principles and program and urges them to reflect upon those principles and program until they are convinced of their correctness and efficacy.

It will become clear to those who do so that the SLP is not just another political party whose members are politicians with private, self-serving political ambitions and who seek or hope to use the Party as a vehicle to advance those ambitions.

Rather, the SLP is a socialist political party whose express purpose is to serve and advance the interests of the working class. The Party has no meaning, no reason for existence outside that fact. As such a party, the SLP embodies a set of principles and a program that it is convinced the American workers must adopt if they are to emancipate themselves from wage slavery and the related economic and social horrors to which the present social system—capitalism—subjects them and their families.

Put another way, the SLP is a working-class revolutionary party, a class-struggle party, an organization of individuals who have come to a common understanding and conclusion regarding the cause and cure of our present society's persistent social problems and have freely joined together for the common purpose of convincing our class—the working class—of the need to organize their latent political and economic powers to accomplish a socialist reconstruction of society. To pursue that objective in an effective manner, they have adopted a set of organizational policies and principles and agreed to be bound by a collective discipline.

We cannot emphasize too strongly that Socialist Labor Party members are not dilettantes; they are not dabblers. They are not in the Socialist Movement for the “excitement” of politics or to satisfy some ego need. They are serious-minded, concerned men and women who are convinced that if socialism does not supersede the outworn, outmoded, conflict-ridden capitalist system, a brutal reaction will surely set in and drag society through another dark age. In that connection, SLP men and women do have a direct personal motivation and interest. They not only want socialism for their class and for humanity, they also want it for their families and for themselves. That is why they work for it with dedicated eagerness.

As the Party's platform makes clear, the SLP, while supporting the working class in its day-to-day battles with the capitalist class,

emphasizes at every appropriate opportunity the urgent need for workers to organize for a revolutionary change to socialism, a system in which the means of production and distribution and all necessary social services—health, education, culture, etc.—are owned by society as a whole and are democratically controlled and administered by the workers themselves through their industrially based organizations.

In the SLP's perspective, the union plays the dominant role. It is in what it designates the Socialist Industrial Union program that the SLP sees the instrument of real and decisive proletarian power. Without minimizing the importance of the educational, agitational and recruiting role of the revolutionary political party, it must be emphasized that the party cannot accomplish the revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. Nor can it serve as the administrative instrument of the new socialist society.

It is the industrial organization—the integrated Socialist Industrial Unions—that constitutes both the decisive revolutionary weapon of the working class and that provides the form for the democratic councils of workers who will constitute the basis for the socialist government.

It should be clear even from the brief explanations above that the SLP's concept of socialism has nothing in common with the so-called "socialism" that has been proclaimed to exist in various parts of the world. The fact is that no nation in the world today is a socialist nation. That is to say, there is no nation in the world where society itself owns the economy and where the workers control and administer it in the collective interest.

It should also be clear that the SLP rejects the "social democratic" concept that socialism can be established by "socialist" politicians taking control of and operating any or all of the political state apparatus, or by gradually reforming capitalism. It should be equally clear that the SLP just as firmly rejects the Leninist concept that socialism can be established by a "vanguard party" of elite revolutionaries substituting itself and its own political state apparatus for the capitalist class and the capitalist state apparatus. During

the past half century, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that none of the above courses can lead to socialism. Rather they lead to continued class rule whatever the superficial political differences.

That is why the SLP lays great stress on the need for the working class to understand what socialism is and the role the workers must play in establishing it. In fact, promoting an understanding among workers of both what capitalism is and what socialism is and convincing them of the need for their explicit rejection of the former in favor of the latter is the main content of the Socialist Labor Party's political activity.

Despite the many threats to our lives today, despite the rampant poverty and misery afflicting tens of millions of workers and their families, a world of peace, liberty, security, health and abundance for all stands within our grasp. The potential to create such a society exists. However, that potential can be realized only if workers act to gain control of their own lives by organizing politically and industrially for socialism.

The SLP's immediate task is to convince workers of those facts. To do so effectively, it requires the conscious and active involvement of its members in widespread agitational and educational activities among workers. A political party that presumes to speak and work for a revolutionary socialist reconstruction of our society must have members who are convinced of the correctness and timeliness of that objective; who are dedicated to that cause; and who are willing to work for it.

Accordingly, among the fundamental requirements for membership in the Socialist Labor Party are the recognition and acknowledgment of the existence of the class struggle, a perceptive understanding of its social, political and economic implications, and a meaningful commitment to support the workers in that struggle. Aside from that, the SLP's membership requirements and admission policies, while specific in several respects, are minimal.

An applicant for membership in the SLP is expected to have acquired—

1. A general understanding of the overall outlook of Marxism.

2. Some knowledge of basic Marxian economics.

3. A conviction that Marxism correctly interprets political, economic, social and historical events and developments.

4. A realization that neither nationalization, welfare statism, communal living, cooperatives, party-run bureaucracies nor reforms are socialism.

5. An understanding that socialism means the elimination of the wages system, the elimination of economic or social classes, the elimination of the state, the complete abolition of capitalist economic relations, and the transfer of all social power—political and economic—to the workers.

6. Finally, the applicant for membership must be in agreement—

(a) That to accomplish the socialist goal the worker majority must form its own political party to advocate the change from capitalism to socialism; to articulate the need for workers to organize into a classwide economic organization; to challenge the political power of the ruling class; and, finally, to capture the existing state machinery in order to dismantle it; and

(b) That only a classwide economic organization can consummate a revolutionary transformation of the means of production, distribution and social services from private- and state-owned property to socially owned property under the democratic control of the worker-majority that operates them every day; and

(c) That only the Socialist Industrial Union provides the necessary organizational framework for a democratically administered socialist society.

One should know enough about the six areas mentioned above to be convinced of the validity of the SLP's position and policies. For no organization can function effectively and harmoniously without basic agreement on major political issues, tactical strategies and goal. Nor can an organization function effectively and harmoniously without its membership being in basic agreement on organizational concepts and procedures.

The SLP is a voluntary organization—that is, individuals are free to join it when they agree with its policies, principles and objectives. They are free to leave it when they find themselves in disagreement with the Party’s basic policies, principles and objectives.

Those who join the Party thereby agree to abide by its rules and regulations and to be subject to its discipline, all of which have been democratically adopted and are democratically implemented and enforced. Consequently, as long as one is a member of the Party, the Party has not only the prerogative but the obligation to insist that he or she conduct himself or herself at all times in harmony and compliance with both the Party’s principles and policies and its organizational rules and regulations. And it should be noted, that not only are members expected to accept and abide by majority decisions, they are expected to help carry them out.

On the other hand, those who want to join the Party are entitled to a frank exposition of the Party’s policies, principles and objectives and a frank enunciation of its organizational rules and disciplinary policies. Members must have every confidence that the Party is intent upon scrupulously upholding the rights of the individual within the concept of majority rule and that the organizational structure and procedures provide the means for doing so.

The basic principles of the SLP’s organizational democracy are embodied in the Party’s Constitution, its Organizational Norms and Procedures and the latest edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order.” The Party’s policies, principles and objectives are summarized in its Platform and “SLP: Position and Program.”

Just as the individual retains the right to reject and leave the Party upon disagreement with it, the organization retains the right to protect itself and its revolutionary integrity from those who might enter its ranks and subsequently prove undesirable or worse. Accordingly, the SLP Constitution provides for a democratic grievance procedure that reflects the organization’s right to cleanse itself by expelling those demonstrated to be undesirable or proven to be an enemy.

The De Leonist concept that “The principle and the organization

are one,” means essentially that theory and practice must be united in order to have meaningful and effective life. Principle without organization is lifeless dogma; an organization without principle is opportunism.

Though it is a political party of the working class, the SLP is open not only to members of the working class, but to all persons who are dissatisfied with the present political, social and economic conditions, and who believe that the means of life—the instruments of production, distribution and social services—that have been created by the efforts of the working class, should become the property of society and be democratically administered and collectively operated for the benefit of all.

The SLP struggles for the overthrow of capitalism and for a socialist society in which the state has been replaced by the self-organized industrial government of workers, the wages system has been abolished, where class divisions have been overcome, and where production is carried on cooperatively and democratically for social use. Moreover, in the tradition of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels and Daniel De Leon, we realize that such a society is an historical necessity that can only be instituted through the revolutionary political and economic organization of the working class.

The formal procedure for submitting an application to join the Socialist Labor Party is spelled out in Article III, Sections 1 through 3 (page 1) of the Party’s Constitution, a copy of which is enclosed. Also enclosed are a membership application blank and a copy of the Party’s Platform.