

NEW LIFE

A SOCIALIST BULLETIN PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE LABOR PARTY MOVEMENT

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Workers! We have a Labor Party!

Highlights of the Convention:

- Worker delegates representing over 1.5 million workers
 - Worker delegates of all ages, ethnic groups, incomes
- The Program of the Labor Party includes a fight for:
- a constitutional amendment for a job at a living wage (\$10/hour to rise automatically with the cost of living)
 - health care for all
 - ban scab workers, repeal anti-labor laws
 - full rights for all, end discrimination
 - support affirmative action
 - No endorsement of any candidates. Labor Party candidates will be discussed at the next convention.

**For more information call toll free:
1-888-44-LABOR.**

Workers!

For the first time in over 100 years, worker delegates from San Francisco to New York, from San Antonio to St. Paul; from steel mills, coal mines, sweat shops, tomato fields, McDonalds and the unemployment line; women, men, white, Black, Latino, native and foreign born, aged 13 to 73; all came together in Cleveland, Ohio, June 6 - 9 and founded a new political party in the United States, the Labor Party.

The convention had 1,367 delegates. Nine international unions officially endorsed and supported the convention including: The United Mine Workers (500,000 members); the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (100,000 members); The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes (50,000 members and over 25% of all railroad workers); the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (40,000 members); the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (6,000 members).

Over 216 individual union locals endorsed including Teamsters Local 703 (UPS local in Chicago) and Bakers Local 19 (a big Teamsters local in Cleveland). Thirty-six Labor Party chapters sent delegates. Designated worker organizations attended and spoke openly from the floor supporting the convention including, Black Workers for Justice from Rocky Mount, North Carolina and the National Welfare Rights Union.

The convention discussed, debated and passed a program, a constitution and a leadership. The draft program, before the convention's amendments, is reproduced in this issue of *New Life*. There is also a list of highlights.

Workers of all ages, of all ethnic groups!

This party is your party. It's on your side. It's a young party, a new party, with a bright future. If you join this party, and only if you join it, we can make this world a better place for all working people. Support it, join it! —
— New Life ☐

This is the struggle of our generation. The future of our children and their children hangs in the balance. It is a struggle we cannot afford to lose.

1. Amend the Constitution to Guarantee Everyone a Job at a Living Wage

Corporate America is systematically destroying millions of decent paying jobs for working people.

At the same time, the rich and the powerful are leading an assault on the public sector and demanding cutbacks in government jobs that provide services for us all.

As a result, there are not enough good jobs to go around. Our public services are crumbling. Nearly one in four workers are either unemployed, involuntarily working part-time, or are working full-time at poverty-level wages.

Since World War II, the government has been committed on paper to a full employment economy. But Corporate America and its army of pliable politicians have made a

“All scabbing must be banned. ...”

mockery of that idea. In the name of creating jobs they give the rich and powerful more tax breaks, more subsidies, and less government regulation.

But trickle-down economics doesn't work for us. It only works for them.

The more subsidies and tax breaks for corporations the politicians give away, the more jobs that are destroyed through mergers, runaway investments, automation, and subcontracting.

These giveaways and concessions must stop.

First and foremost everyone, both in the private and public sectors, needs a guarantee of a right to a job at a living wage - one that pays above poverty-level wages and is indexed to inflation. And in today's world that comes to about \$10 an hour.

We want this right written directly into the U.S. Constitution.

The Declaration of Independence affirmed our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Preamble to the Constitution promised “to establish Justice,... promote

the General Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity.”

But for working people all this means nothing if we don't have the right to a job.

2. Pay Laid-Off Workers Two Months Severance for Every Year of Service

Every time a corporation lays off workers the value of its stock rises and its executive officers reap rich rewards. Meanwhile laid-off workers and their communities pay the price.

On average, workers lose over \$100,000 of their lifetime earnings when they are laid off. In addition, numerous studies show that unemployed workers and their families experience increased rates of disease and social problems like suicide and domestic violence.

Communities also suffer from the declining incomes and increasing social problems caused by layoffs. This burden on our communities averages about \$25,000 per laid-off worker.

Nothing will change until Corporate America is forced to pay for some of the damage it causes.

We therefore propose a Job Destruction Penalty Act modeled after the one recently proposed by the New Jersey Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO.

- Under the Act corporations with 100 or more employees globally will be required to pay each laid off worker two months severance pay for every year of service.
- And they will be required to pay \$25,000 per laid-off worker to the local community to offset rising social costs.

This Job Destruction Penalty Act will make Corporate America think twice about layoffs.

3. Restore Workers' Rights to Organize, Bargain and Strike

The right to organize unions and to bargain freely is being destroyed by employers.

Today, nearly 1 out of 10 workers involved in union organizing drives is illegally fired by employers who wage a campaign of fear, threats and slick propaganda to keep workers from exercising a genuinely free choice.

That is why union membership is declining. And as union membership falls so do the wages of all working people, union and non-

union alike. (The buying power of the average worker's wage has declined by 15 percent over the last 25 years.)

As a Labor Party, we will support the courageous efforts of our brothers and sisters out in the streets and in the fields all over this nation to overcome these legal handicaps, especially in the South and Southwest where the laws are most hostile.

We also must dedicate ourselves to fighting for a complete overhaul of this country's labor laws.

- We must win repeal of the anti-worker Taft-Hartley Amendments, which sharply tilted the labor law in favor of employers.
- We want card-check recognition of un-

“We favor full rights for all, and we will tolerate no discrimination or other form of injustice ...”

ion bargaining status, as in Canada.

- New union members must have the right to submit a first contract to binding arbitration at the request of the union.
- All employees of state and local governments must have full collective bargaining rights.
- Agricultural and other excluded workers must be covered by the nation's labor laws.
- All scabbing must be banned.
- We oppose all attempts to legalize company unions and to repeal or weaken the Davis-Bacon Act.
- Railway unions must be able to exercise their rights to bargain and to strike without government interference.
- We demand a law requiring employers who purchase or merge with other companies to honor all existing collective bargaining agreements and contracts.
- While we support rehabilitation and the learning of skills, we oppose all use of prison labor for the production of goods and services.

4. End Bigotry: An Injury to One is an Injury to All

For generations, bosses have profited by

dividing working people on the basis of race, gender and national origin.

Rather than creating enough jobs, they force us to fight among ourselves for the few good ones that remain. Rather than creating enough opportunities for higher education, they force us and our children to quarrel over the available spots.

We can curb corporate power only if we unite around a common vision of economic justice and fairness. Real democracy includes all of us. We work in all kinds of occupations, and come from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. We are women as well as men.

- Every time a corporation pays a woman less for the same or comparable work, we are all paid less.
- Every time a minority worker is denied a decent job or promotion, we are all denied promotion.
- When immigrants are scapegoated and denied full labor rights and civil rights, we are all scapegoated and denied our rights.

We favor full rights for all, and we will tolerate no discrimination or other form of injustice based on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, national origin, age, creed, sexual orientation, or native tongue.

We support affirmative action and anti-discrimination programs to take away the bosses' power to divide and conquer.

We support an immigration policy that does not discriminate on any basis; and a trade policy that supports international fair labor standards and works to alleviate the conditions that send people tramping around the globe in search of opportunity.

We also support comparable worth initiatives and strong sanctions against sexual harassment to make the workplace safe and fair for women workers.

This Labor Party stands against current efforts to dismantle these programs. From the shop floor to the executive suite, we believe the workforce should reflect the wonderfully diverse face of our nation. We stand for justice and the end to discrimination.

5. Guarantee Universal Access to Quality Health Care

Health care is the most profitable industry in the nation. It is the most shameless example of unbridled corporate greed in the U.S. In the guise of cost-containment, it redistributes resources from sick people and their

caregivers to wealthy businessmen and shareholders.

Forty-two million Americans have no health insurance. Eighty percent of the uninsured are working people and their dependents. And tying health care coverage to the job encourages companies to use part-time and temporary workers to evade providing benefits.

We spend more on health care than any other nation in the world. But a poorly regulated, corporate-dominated health care system eliminates choice, erodes care, and inflates administrative costs while boosting profits and CEO compensation.

Health care is a critical social good that

"A 32-Hour, 4-day Work Week"

demands collective interests prevail over private gain. We call for:

- Universal entitlement for all residents to comprehensive health care benefits including preventive, curative, rehabilitative and long term care. There must be freedom to choose one's own doctor and health professionals.
- Single payer health insurance, publicly administered and funded, delivered by a nonprofit system.
- Full funding of public health programs performed by the public sector to provide services to vulnerable populations, monitor population disease trends, and to prevent and treat communicable diseases.
- Funding for research that serves the public good, not private gain. Academic health centers must have support for their research mission.
- Informed choice and unimpeded access to a full range of family planning and reproductive services for men and women.
- Strong representation and a decision-making role for health care recipients and health care workers in public planning and oversight bodies.

6. Less Work, More Money

- **A 32-Hour, 4-day Work Week**
- **Double-time Minimum for All Overtime**

- **An Hour off with pay for Every two Hours of Overtime**
- **20 Mandatory Paid Vacation Days for All**
- **One year paid leave for every seven years of work**

Each year we become more and more productive at work. In a fair and just economy, increased productivity should allow us to work fewer hours, not more. Yet compared to the late 1960s, we are now working an average of more than one extra month annually.

We work longer hours and have less vacation time than almost all workers in the industrialized world. While many of us cannot find work, factory overtime is now at record levels because it is more profitable to pay overtime than it is to hire new workers.

Enough is enough.

We call for amending the Fair Labor Standards Act to:

- Define the normal work week to 32 hours without loss of pay or benefits
- Provide a minimum of double-time pay for all hours worked over 32 hours a week and 8 hours a day
- Forbid compulsory overtime
- Mandate one hour off with pay for every two hours of overtime
- Require twenty days paid vacation for all workers in addition to the federal holidays
- Provide one year of paid educational leave for every seven years worked.

Taken together these proposals will create millions of new jobs and allow us free time we need to care for our families and to participate in our communities. More family time and more community participation should be the fruit of increased labor productivity.

7. Protect Our Families

- **Paid Family Leave**
- **Flexible Working Schedules**
- **Affordable Child and Elder Care for All**
- **Mandatory Minimum Pensions for All**

While politicians babble about family values, this Labor Party intends to do something real to protect our families.

We call for a basic benefit package that

covers all working people — full-time and part-time workers, employed and unemployed. This package would include:

- Twelve weeks paid family leave for each newborn or adopted child, and for taking care of ill family members.
- A guarantee of flexible working schedules so that we can arrange our own time to deal with personal and family concerns.
- Mandatory minimum pensions for all workers, fully vested and portable, that do not reduce social security benefits.
- Subsidized, high quality child care and elder care for all who need it.

Such benefits already exist in most European countries. But they are under attack by corporations who want benefits pushed down to the lower levels available in the US. We must end this race to the bottom by bringing our benefits up to more just and humane levels.

This is our program to protect family values.

8. Ensure Everyone Access to High Quality Public Education

We are a nation of educational haves and have nots.

The rich protect their children in elite private schools while our children suffer in increasingly crowded, dangerous, and underfunded public schools.

The rich send their children to the best colleges and universities, while more and more of our children are denied higher education due to rising tuition costs and deep cutbacks in our state universities.

This two-tiered educational system must end.

We call for a renewed commitment to high quality public education for all, not voucher systems and other privatization schemes that further reduce resources for our public schools.

We call for:

- National financing of all public education (instead of property taxes) so that each child, not just those of the rich, has the resources necessary for a good learning environment.
- National legislation and funds to reduce the student-teacher ratio to 15 to 1 in all public schools.
- National legislation and funding to extend public schools for pre-K children

starting at age 3 on a voluntary basis.

- Parent education at public schools to help parents from all backgrounds learn more about how to help their children learn at home.
- Free public university and technical education of all kinds for everyone who wants additional education. Each of us should be able to go to school as far as our abilities can carry us.
- Like the GI Bill of Rights, everyone 18 years or over should receive a minimum livable wage for four years when attending a post-secondary educational institution.

9. Stop Corporate Abuse of Trade

Multinational corporations and most of their hired politicians claim that free trade is good for us. But the corporate version of free trade is really about seeking the cheapest sources of labor and escaping labor and environmental standards wherever they interfere with profits.

We favor free and open trade, but only if the rights of all workers, both here and abroad, are strongly protected. Then trade will not only be free, it will also be fair.

Trade is not free or fair if it pits us against workers who get paid pennies a day, work in horrid conditions, and enjoy no legal rights.

Trade is not free or fair if it makes it easier for corporations to pollute their workers and the environment.

We oppose NAFTA and GATT in their current forms. We also reject narrowly nationalistic solutions to trade imbalances that scapegoat our fellow workers in other countries. We believe in trading freely with all trading partners who adhere to basic minimum labor and environmental standards.

- We call for establishing strong international labor and environmental standards that improve conditions for low wage workers, not ratchet ours down.
- We call for worker inspection teams to police these standards.
- Such teams of worker representatives from different nations should regularly visit export-oriented facilities around the world to determine whether minimum standards are being met.
- Only products meeting such standards would receive a "fair trade" seal of approval and be eligible for free and open trade.

- And we insist that workers themselves be able to enforce these sanctions, relying on traditional rights to refuse to handle "unfair" products.

Our Labor Party will actively promote a strategy of international solidarity and cooperation with labor movements and labor parties in other nations to confront the global attack on our environment and living conditions. We oppose all policies instituted by corporate-dominated lending institutions like the World Bank, that force developing nations to lower the wages of their workers.

" ... much of Corporate America is living on ... tax breaks and direct government subsidiesWe support a total end to corporate tax breaks and subsidies....."

Finally, we demand that our government stop doing the bidding of global corporations and stop using military and foreign policy to prop up anti-labor regimes that violate human rights.

10. End of Corporate Welfare as We Know It.

Corporate Welfare is a disgrace.

Today much of Corporate America is living on welfare in the form of tax breaks and direct government subsidies.

To divert us from this estimated two hundred billion dollar a year corporate welfare ripoff, media pundits and corporate politicians aim their fire at the poor on low-income welfare (which amounts to less than one third of what corporations take from the treasury.)

- State governments dole out billions in "incentives" to lure business from other states or to keep the business that is already there from going elsewhere.
- The federal government doles out billions more in subsidies and tax breaks to corporate special interests. Meanwhile the corporations return the favor by pouring millions into the campaign coffers of both parties.

This Labor Party opposes all forms of welfare for corporations and the rich.

- We support a total end to corporate tax breaks and subsidies.
- We call for an end to the war between the states. All corporations should pay a standard community investment tax wherever they go, to end the tax competition among states and communities.
- We support strong national standards for labor rights and the environment so that corporations can no longer force states and cities into a brutal competition for jobs at any cost.

That's what we call welfare reform.

11. Make the Wealthy to Pay their Fair Share of Taxes

Over the past twenty-five years, while we have suffered a decline in our standard of living, a staggering amount of wealth has been pumped up into the hands of a tiny elite. Never before has so much money been diverted into the hands of so few.

From 1983 to 1989 alone the top one percent of all families increased their wealth by over 1.45 trillion dollars. At the same time the national debt increased by 1.49 trillion dollars.

We need a just and simplified tax system to reclaim what is rightfully ours. We need to make the rich pay their fair share.

And to ensure that they do, we propose the following kind of wealth taxes:

- Higher income tax rates for the rich and the elimination of all tax loopholes used by the rich
- Reductions in sales and property taxes that hit working people the hardest
- A wealth tax on those with over 2 million dollars in net worth (total assets minus total debt)
- A tax on all mergers and acquisitions of over \$1 billion dollars, which would slow down the corporate destruction of jobs through giant mergers
- A tax on all stock options valued over \$1 million dollars to discourage inflated CEO compensation
- A tax on all electronic transfers of funds to and from the US
- A tax on savings and loan institutions to pay back the \$500 billion S&L bailout
- A tax on non-profit institutions and foundations with \$100 million or more in assets

- A 100 percent tax on that portion of executive salaries exceeding twenty times the average worker's pay in that corporation.

Such taxes would not only make our tax system fair and just, but it would also provide this country with the needed funds to provide decent jobs and benefits for all.

12. Revitalize the Public Sector

The public sector has gotten a bad name because much of what passes for government today is a way to enrich the wealthy at our expense. Through government Corporate America receives its long list of welfare in tax breaks, subsidies and cost plus contracts. Even worse, as sales taxes, payroll taxes, and property taxes on working people have been unfairly increased, many important public services have been sharply reduced.

Corporate-backed politicians are using the anti-government sentiment they have so carefully engineered to kill vital programs that many employers have always despised. If corporations continue to get their way, OSHA will be gutted, our environmental and labor laws will be worthless, our public health system will be dismantled, and the safety net and public universities will be only a dim memory.

It's time for working people to put an end to this nonsense.

The Labor Party stands firmly opposed to the privatization and contracting out of traditional public services.

A government that works for us would provide critical goods and services that can not, and should not, be run for profit. Our kind of government would:

- regulate and limit the destructive effects of corporate greed
- implement our program to guarantee everyone a decent job
- ensure quality health care for all
- rebuild our infrastructure and expand mass transportation
- clean up and protect our environment
- help enforce workplace regulations
- provide quality education, housing, and child care for all
- protect our social security; and,
- insure adequate national defense

We can fund all of these programs with a

more equitable tax system that sharply increases taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Additional funds can be gained by eliminating unnecessary and wasteful military spending.

Let's get government to work for us, not for the corporations.

13. End Corporate Domination of Elections

The current system of privately financed elections essentially takes away our right to vote. Today Corporate America and the rich use their vast wealth to dominate the election process.

As a result, politicians put the vested interests of the rich and powerful ahead of the needs and concerns of their constituents and the nation as a whole. It is virtually impossible to pass legislation that protects and empowers working people.

Instead we are forced to watch elected politicians of both parties routinely rob the public treasury of billions of dollars, giving their rich and powerful donors tax breaks, subsidies, bail-outs, and regulatory exemptions.

We demand an end to this robbery. We demand a level playing field.

We want:

- a financial cap on what any candidate can spend on elections.
- full public financing of state and national elections based on the principle of "one person, one vote" and "government of, by, and for the people."
- full and equal public financing and media time for candidates who have proven popular support, rather than just access to big contributors.
- Such funds should be made available only to those candidates who pledge not to raise and spend any private money whatsoever during the primary and general election periods.

Enacting such a system would encourage Americans from all walks of life, regardless of their economic means, to seek public office and save taxpayers billions of dollars of corporate welfare heaped on the rich and powerful.

Such a system would allow all of us a fair and equal voice in deciding who should represent us and what legislation should be passed. Such a system - and a Labor Party - would make democracy a reality.

14. Build A Just Transition Movement to Protect Jobs and the Environment

This Labor Party affirms its commitment to a clean and safe environment. We all need clean workplaces, clean air, and clean water. But we also need our jobs.

We reject the false choice of jobs or the environment. We will not be held hostage by corporate polluters who poison our workplaces and our communities.

We refuse this corporate blackmail. Corporations are not interested in either saving our jobs or protecting the environment.

But we also know that environmental change is coming. What we produce and how we produce will change as steps are taken to protect people and the natural environment from harm.

The Labor Party will support taking such steps if and only if the livelihoods of working people endangered by environmental change are fully protected.

Therefore, the Labor Party calls for the creation of a new worker-oriented environmental movement — a Just Transition Movement — that puts forth a fair and just transition program to protect both jobs and the environment.

- All workers with jobs endangered by steps taken to protect the environment are to be made whole and to receive full income and benefits as they make the difficult transition to alternative work.
- The cost of this Just Transition Income Support program will be paid for by taxes on corporate polluters.

15. Worker Inspectors to Enforce Safety & Health Regulation

The regulation of occupational safety & health hazards in our offices, factories, and fields is shamefully inadequate, and the enforcement of the standards we have is woefully neglected.

“The Labor Party stands firmly opposed to the privatization and contracting out of traditional public services.”

here are too few safety inspectors to visit all the workplaces that need to be visited.

- Thousands of untested new chemicals are introduced into use each year, exposing factory workers, office workers, and farm workers to unknown hazards.
- Incidents take place without adequate investigations being conducted; and, when incidents are investigated by impartial investigators, their findings are rarely implemented.

The Labor Party must address this important area. For starters, we need the right to act and to enforce any and all safety & health regulations.

- We call for national legislation to train and deputize workers to be on the job inspectors in each and every workplace.
- Such inspectors should be protected against corporate harassment and discrimination and should be able to do their job without fear of reprisal.
- Such inspectors should have the power to shut down hazardous operations and to enforce the right of every worker to refuse unsafe work.
- Such inspectors should have the power to investigate incidents to uncover their root causes and to force the implementation of their findings.
- Because we know our work sites, worker-inspectors would be better able to protect the workforce exposure and the community from disaster. Worker-inspectors will save lives.

In addition, we need the following national laws:

- All chemicals must be tested for their impacts on human health and the environment before they are introduced into our workplaces.
- Working people through their unions should receive advance notice before new chemicals are introduced into the workplace and have the power to block their introduction for safety reasons.

16. Reclaiming the Workplace: Job Design, Technology and Skill

Labor has little or no voice in the design or implementation of new technologies. Instead, giant corporations use technological research, design, and workplace implementation to maximize their profits at our expense.

Corporations control the design and use of computers and information technologies, as well as other kinds of mechanization and automation.

They also control the design of work itself, imposing new administrative and computerized control technologies under such names as “workplace re-engineering”. Like previous corporate methods, workplace re-engineering is based on speed up and deskilling. However it poses another danger to our jobs as well.

The corporate control of workplace design destroys jobs. Corporations implement technologies and designs that make it profitable to replace full-time workers with an army of temporaries.

To fight back we call for the creation of a labor-based, publicly-funded Technology Democratization Commission, which will work to ensure that labor plays an important role shaping the development and implementation of technology.

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The Labor Party Convention



Striking Detroit newspaper workers received a lot of support from the convention. Delegates passed a resolution in support of a national march on Detroit. Here, striking workers receive a contribution from the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, headquartered in Southfield, Michigan.



Delegates listen to the convention debate.



Labor Party delegates left the convention to demonstrate against Cleveland Mayor White's attacks on the rights of city workers to collective bargaining.



Young delegates organize caucus

Amid the speeches, voting, debating and cheering at the Labor Party Convention, several meetings and caucuses took place. One of these was a Youth Meeting. Several young delegates to the Labor Party Convention came together to talk about why the Labor Party was an important step forward for youth, what needs to be done to get more youth involved in the Labor Party Movement, as well as what place should young people have in the Party.

All the young delegates felt that the most important issues for a majority of young people are development of good-paying jobs, higher minimum wage, and health care for all. The young members also felt the Labor Party should develop strong campaigns around these issues. Young workers could take an active role in working and fighting for them in their schools and workplaces.

It was the belief of the young delegates that youth needs a voice in the Labor Party. If young people don't have input in Party decision making, it will be difficult for them to feel a part of the Party. As a way to help create a voice for youth the young delegates put together an Action Plan.

We put together a mailing and phone list which each Youth Meeting participant received. We decided to work in our chapters to recruit youth to the Labor Party around the issues important to them. We agreed to share ideas and results of actions with each other. Finally, to develop a voice for youth, we decided we would go to the chapter convention and propose that one of the chapter seats be given to a representative of the young Labor Party members.

If you would like to work with young Labor Party members for these ideas, call 810-948-1010 x288. — Tim James