**Declaration of Principles of the Central Labor Union of New York[[1]](#endnote-1)**

**[and platform of the United Labor Party of New York City, 1882 and 1883]**

Land the Common Property of the People — The land of every country is the common property of the people of that country, because its real owner — the Creator who made it — has transferred it as a voluntary gift to them. *Terram autem dedit filiis hominum* (the earth he hath given to the children of men). Now as every individual in every country is a creature and a child of God, and as all his creatures are equal in his sight, any settlement of the land of this or any other country that would exclude the humblest man in that country from his share in the common inheritance would not only be an injustice and a wrong to that man, but would, moreover, be an impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of the Creator.

Labor creates all wealth, therefore the laborer is entitled to his full share of the wealth produced by the combined efforts of himself and toiling brethren.

Poverty is a disgrace to a free commonwealth. But when the producers of the wealth of a nation live in poverty, while idlers roll in luxury and dissipation, then the economic system which causes such unnatural conditions must be wrong, and requires a serious consideration and energetic opposition on the part of the sufferers.

Economical servitude degrades political liberties to a farce. Men who are bound to follow the dictates of factory lords, that they may earn a livelihood, are not free. It is, therefore, evident that as the power of combined and centralized capital increases, the political liberties of the toiling masses become more and more illusory.

There can be no harmony between capital and labor under the present industrial system for the simple reason that capital, in its modern character, consists of unpaid labor in the shape of profits wrongfully extorted from the producer, who possesses neither the land nor the means of production, and is, therefore, compelled to sell his arms, brains, or both, to the possessor of the means of production and of the land and at such prices as the uncertain and speculative market may allow.

Machinery, inventions and improved means of production have the tendency to induce women and children to take the places of men. We regard children’s labor as a disgrace to civilization, and that a lack of good education on the part of our posterity must necessarily endanger the future of our republic.

Organizations of trade and labor unions are the only means to put a check to the evil outgrowths of the prevailing capitalistic system, and at the same time, contain the seed for a new and better system, provided they keep up with the progress of the age and with the development of advanced ideas.

Organizations of trade and labor unions have hitherto paid attention to economical questions only. While they have struggled for higher wages and a reduction of hours of labor, they have partially protected themselves as producers — but not as consumers. The governing capitalistic classes have meanwhile not been idle. They have through their political representatives obtained legislation protecting them in their schemes to wring from the workers all the benefits that strikes and resistance gained for them, namely by high rents, costly transportation of produce, gigantic corners in grain and provisions, and by monopolizing the issue of money. They have justified the use of police, of militia, and even of the Federal troops against the workers when capitalistic interests seemed to be endangered, while at the same time trades and labor unions went so far as to even prohibit the discussion of political topics in their meetings, and on election day their members cast their votes in favor of a representative of the very same class that oppresses them all the year round.

The emancipation of the working classes must be achieved by the working classes themselves, as no other class has an interest in improving their condition. We regard the present ruling Democratic and Republican parties as purely capitalistic — unable if willing, and unwilling if able to do even the least for oppressed labor. We regard these parties, besides their capitalistic tendencies, as being solely devoted to spoils and to office-hunting for themselves and their hirelings. Therefore, we consider it degrading for workingmen to beg or petition them any longer, or to place any dependence on the promises which candidates of such parties make before election.

The combined wage-working class represents the great majority of the people. In their hands rests the future of our free institutions, and it is their destiny to replace the present political corruption by a government of the people, for the people, and by the people. We regard it as the sacred duty of every honorable laboring man to sever his affiliations with the Republican and Democratic parties, or their branch offspring, and to devote his energy and attention to the organization of his trade or labor union, and the concentration of all unions into one solid body, for the purpose of assisting each other in all struggles — political or economical — to resist every attempt of the ruling classes directed against our liberties, and to extend our fraternal hand to the workers of our land and to all nations on the globe that struggle for the same independence.

WHAT THEY DEMAND

Based upon the foregoing declaration of principles, the trade and labor unions of New York and vicinity formed a centralization of their trades, known as the Central Labor Union, for the purpose of organizing and concentrating the toiling class for mutual protection, education, and combined action in behalf of labor’s cause.

We demand the following:

1. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day, so that the working people may lessen the supply of idle labor, that they may have more time for social enjoyment and intellectual improvement, and be enabled to reap the advantages conferred by labor-saving machinery which their brains have created.

2. The prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines and factories before attaining their fourteenth year.

3. The abolishment of the contract system on national, State and municipal work.

4. The abolition of the system of letting out by contract the labor of convicts in prisons and reformatory institutions.

5. The abolishment of the so-called truck system and the enactment of laws to compel manufacturers and corporations to pay their employees weekly in full for labor performed during the preceding week, in the lawful money of the country.

6. The enactment of laws giving the laborers a first lien on their work for their full wages.

7. The securing for both sexes of equal pay for equal work.

8. The establishment of bureaus of labor statistics in States as well as by the National Government, the officers of each bureaus to be taken from the labor organizations.

9. Sanitary inspection of mines, factories and all conditions of labor, and a general provision for health and safety for workingmen and women in factories.

10. The abolishment of the conspiracy law, tramp laws, and the abrogation of all laws that do not bear equally upon capital and labor and its representatives.

11. To prevail upon Government to establish a purely national circulating medium, issued directly to the people, without the intervention of banking corporations.

1. *Truth*, Apr 17, 1882, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)