

Out of Work!

How Safe Is YOUR Job?

Jobless! Willing and able to work, a family to feed and shelter—but no work! This is the plight shared by millions of Americans in a land of plenty. And millions more live in fear that their jobs may soon disappear! Why? What's wrong?

socialism peacefully. Thanks to the foresight of the Founding Fathers who put a clause in the Constitution—Article V, the amendment clause—providing for social change, we can outlaw capitalist ownership by a democratic decision at the polls.

But before we can do that we must do two things. First, we the workers must reject the political

The workers of America need a clear and candid answer to this question. Instead they are fed massive doses of optimism to the effect that this is a temporary “recession”—a kind of economic coffee break between booms.

But optimism doesn't provide food or shelter, nor does it explain the cause of unemployment.

The first step toward solving any serious problem is a clear understanding of its cause. The Socialist Labor Party (founded in 1890) says the cause of unemploy-

ment has nothing to do with who lives in the White House or sits in Congress. Politicians don't decide who will work and who will not. They do not decide what to produce or when to produce it. In a capitalist economy those decisions are made by those who own the things needed to produce and distribute the goods and services that everyone needs. They are made by the capitalist class.

Capitalism's Weakness

Capitalists and their politicians have no more control over eco-

nomic crises than they have over earthquakes or hurricanes. The “recessions” and “depressions” that bring unemployment are caused by the capitalist system itself. That's because the capitalist system has a fatal weakness. That weakness is that wages are never enough for workers to buy back all that they produce. Wages may go up in “good times” and fall in bad ones, but in the long run and on the average workers get what is loosely called “a living wage.”

As a result, workers can buy back only a fraction of their product. The rest—the difference between what workers produce and what their wages can buy—is either consumed by the capitalists, spent on expanding and modernizing industry, exported to other countries, or simply wasted.

Too Much to Sell

But American workers produce so much that despite all this capitalist waste and spending huge surpluses of unsold goods pile up. Every unemployment crisis since

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the Great Depression of the 1930s was triggered by this "overproduction." The present crisis is no different. Hard times are here for workers because they produced too much!

When we say "too much" we mean too much to sell, not too much to use. Tens of millions of Americans have basic needs that are not being filled. That's because things aren't produced to satisfy human needs: they're produced to be sold at a profit. When capitalists can't sell what workers have produced, production is cut back, factories close down, offices are vacated and unemployment spreads.

New technology and automation only make things worse. Every new advance in labor-displacing technology widens the gap between what workers produce and what their wages will buy. The result is that economic crises occur at frequent intervals. There have been four recessions since 1970 and nine since the end of World War II.

From 'Boom' to Bust

The 1990s were supposed to be "boom" years during which American workers produced more than ever before. But the so-called boom brought no real or lasting security to the workers who produced all that wealth. The increase in unemployment and the persistence of poverty is proof of that. And it takes only weeks or months of unemployment to wipe out any "gains" from years of hard work.

All this is the logical result of capitalism—of a system in which a numerically small class of capitalists owns all the means of social production, while the overwhelming majority, the working class, owns nothing except their ability to work.

And by "workers" we mean teachers as well as truck drivers, scientists as well as steelworkers. We also mean the millions of unemployed workers whose abilities to perform mental and manual labor are not being used, but are being wasted by capitalism. These are the grim realities of capitalism.

Reforms Solve Nothing

Government reforms can't solve the problem, and history proves it. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, capitalism adopted the most elaborate social reform program in history. It was called the "New Deal," but it failed to end unemployment. President Roosevelt admitted as much in 1940 when he said: "We cannot report ... that all the problems are solved. The fact of unemployment of millions of men and women remains a symptom of a number of difficulties in our economic system not yet adjusted... we have not yet found a way to employ the surplus of our labor which the efficiency of our industrial processes has created...."

The lesson is clear. Unemployment and depressions are inherent in the capitalist system. Consequently, the interests of the overwhelming majority dictate

that capitalism be replaced by a new social system capable of guaranteeing security for all—socialism.

Genuine Socialism

Unfortunately, many workers think that socialism means an oppressive system of government ownership and control similar to what used to exist in Russia. The truth is that socialism never existed in Russia, or anywhere else. Socialism means economic democracy. There was no more economic democracy in the old Soviet Union than there is in the United States.

Under genuine socialism there would be neither capitalists nor bureaucrats. The present political government that serves the interests of a small class of economic despots would be replaced by a democratic economic administration based on representation from all the industries and services. Workers would vote where they work. They would elect their own supervisors, plant management committees and representatives to all higher administrative councils. On the national level, to administer and direct overall social production, there would be an Industrial Union Congress representing all the trades and industries of the land.

This new congress would be under the constant control of the workers and would be fully responsive to the wishes of the majority because the decisive power—the economic power—will be firmly in the hands of the rank and file.

In America we have everything it takes to end unemployment and poverty and to build a society in which freedom and security would be guaranteed to all. That is a fact no one can dispute. We have an abundance of skilled and productive labor. We have the tools. We have the raw materials. In short, we have the physical means with which to produce an abundance for all. What we don't have, however, is the economic democracy that would enable us to use these skills, tools and resources to end unemployment and poverty permanently.

The solution to the problem of unemployment is not complicated. We—the working men and women who have made this the richest country in history—must replace private ownership of the industries with social ownership (i.e., the industries must be owned by all the people collectively). We must replace production for sale and profit with a system of production for use. And we must replace economic dictatorship with economic democracy.

Then and only then will America belong to its people again. Then and only then will involuntary unemployment be eliminated. Then, instead of kicking workers out of jobs, automation will shorten the workday, workweek and workyear. Technological progress will no longer be something for us workers to fear, but an unqualified blessing that will insure abundance and leisure for all.

In America we can achieve