

Resolution on Puerto Rico

*Adopted by the 42nd National Convention (1995) of the
Socialist Labor Party of America*

The Puerto Rican working class has been subject to decades of unrestrained plundering and imperialist exploitation by American capitalism. The colony has long suffered the humiliations of vassalage. Today over 85 percent of its economy is owned and controlled by U.S. banks and corporations. Aside from its continuing importance as a source of cheap labor power and as a market for U.S. goods, discoveries over the last two decades of copper, nickel and oil reserves valued in the billions have fortified U.S. imperialist determination to maintain a tight grip on the island.

Militarily, Puerto Rico serves U.S. capitalism as an important link in continued U.S. control over access to the Panama Canal; as a base of operations that facilitates U.S. military intervention in the Caribbean region and that intimidates other countries in the region; as a control center for naval activities and defense of the U.S. merchant marine and coastline; and as a location for military training and the testing of U.S. weaponry. U.S. military presence on the island amounts to a vast occupation force whose influence pervades Puerto Rican society.

Politically, the U.S. ruling class has sought to frustrate and dilute what it sees as the aspirations of the Puerto Rican people for self-determination with the ploy of "commonwealth" status and proposals for statehood that would merely produce a different form of U.S. capitalist control of the Puerto Rican economy and likely intensify the exploitation of an already suffering Puerto Rican working class.

The oppressive character of U.S. domination is evident in the misery and poverty of the Puerto Rican people. Mass unemployment and low wages have put a majority of the population under the official poverty line. Squalor and wretchedness reveal themselves everywhere in the country save for U.S. capitalism's citadels of trade, tourism and militarism.

Therefore let this convention reaffirm:

- (1) That the SLP gives its unqualified support to the right of the Puerto Rican people to independence, and
- (2) That the common class enemy of both the American and Puerto Rican working classes is the capitalist class of the United States and of every other nation, and
- (3) That the working class of the United States is urged to support the right of Puerto Ricans to national independence by opposing any attempt by the government of the United States to retard or combat their aspirations to self-determination.