

# THE FORUM

## THE SOCIALIST PLATFORM

La Grande, July 1.—(To the Editor).—The La Grande Socialist local submits the following self-explained article for the perusal of Observer readers:

If I Were President  
BY ALLAN L. BENSON  
(Socialist Candidate for President)

Here is an article by Allan L. Benson, Socialist candidate for president, that appears in the current issue of the weekly magazine, "Every Week". In pointing out why this article was published the editor of "Every Week" has the following to say:

"In a vague sort of way, you and I know something about Socialism. But the question I have frequently asked myself is, 'Suppose the Socialists were really to elect a president—what specifically would he do?' I put the question up to Mr. Allan L. Benson, whom the Socialist Party has nominated for the presidency, and his answer is here passed on to you. It is a good thing for an editor once in a while to print an article, with every single paragraph of which he disagrees."

"Every Week's" editor, however, will be surprised to learn how many of his readers agree with many, if not all of the paragraphs, appearing in the article which is as follows:

If I were President of the United States, I would keep the country out of war over technicalities of international law as long as I had the power to get the country into war. But at the earliest moment I would try to divest myself of the power to get the country into war. The question of whether a nation shall go to war or remain at peace is too often determined by its foreign policies. I do not believe that any man should have the power to determine whether a nation shall go to war or remain at peace. I believe that the foreign policies of this government should be determined by Congress; and that the people, by referendum, should have the power to halt Congress.

I believe that diplomacy should be transferred from the dark to the daylight; that the people should be kept constantly, promptly, and fully informed as to the progress of their diplomatic affairs; and that even Congress should be denied the right to make war, except to repel actual invasion. I believe that if we were to attack any other nation, we should do so only after a majority of the people had so voted, and that those who vote except in peace, I should immediately draft into the army. Inasmuch as there can be for a nation no happiness except in peace, I should immediately urge the people to place under their own control diplomacy and the war-making power.

Twenty Supreme Court Judges  
PEACE having been safeguarded in this manner, I should go about it to try to make peace worth while for everybody in this country by preventing everybody from taking from anybody any part of the value produced by his labor. In other words, I should urge Congress to get rid of the profit-taking capitalist class of acquiring and operating, upon behalf of the people, the great industries and the great natural resources of the United States. If the Congress were a Socialist Congress, it would be but a matter of form to make the suggestion. If the Supreme Court of the United States were, as it is, a capitalist court, it would undoubtedly, if it had an opportunity, declare such legislation to be unconstitutional. If it were a capitalist court, I should try to make sure that it had no such opportunity. I would suggest to the Congress that it increase the court from nine to twenty, and would nominate eleven Socialist lawyers to complete the court and outvote the other nine.

There is nothing sacred about the number nine as applied to this court. In the beginning, it was composed of seven to eight. The court had decided adversely to the administration in the so-called "Legal Tender Cases," and the extra judge was added to enable Grant to appoint a man who would reverse the court's decision, which he did. But, while we should have respectable authority for increasing the court to get our decisions, we should use such measures only temporarily. As quickly as a constitutional amendment could be put through the state legislatures, we should take from the court its usurped power to pass upon the constitutionality of acts of congress. I say "usurped" because the constitution gives the court no such power, and the court for years after its creation claimed no such power.

Congress Should Operate Railroads  
INASMUCH as transportation lies at the bottom of our industrial and social system, I should urge Congress, first, to acquire and operate the railroads. I should be in favor of buying the railroads and paying in government bonds what it would actually cost to reproduce them. I would suggest that the bonds be drawn to run fifty years, and that from the earnings of the roads 2 per cent of the face value of the bonds be taken every year and placed in a sinking fund for their redemption at maturity.

I should advise that all of the great industries and all of our great natural resources be acquired in the same manner—by paying in long-term government bonds. If there were determined for instance—say by the Beef Trust—that the cost of reproducing its plant was some fabulous figure, I should urge congress to get at the exact facts by entering the packing business in competition with the trust and selling meat at cost. A government plant half the size of the trust's would squeeze out the trust. The exploitive value of the trust's properties

would be gone, and only their actual value as physical assets would remain. Whenever necessary, I would urge the application of the same principle of government competition for the ascertainment of real values. I doubt, however, whether it would be necessary to make more than one demonstration.

We have been trying for many years to reduce the price of anthracite coal, with the result that we have gained a number of legal "victories" while the price of coal has continued to ascend. I would urge congress to acquire and operate the coal mines. I would urge that the present owners be paid in government bonds a sum equivalent to the cost of reproducing their machinery and buildings. I should not be in favor of paying a cent to anybody who may pretend to own the coal in the ground. What no man made no man should be paid for.

### Government Farms and Farm Machinery

THE UNITED STATES Department of Agriculture a few months ago issued a bulletin, the substance of which was that small farms could not be made to pay; that considerable capital is required to make agriculture remunerative. We also know that land in many states is becoming so expensive that farmers can not afford to own it—a fact that is proved by the constant increase in the percentage of farms tilled by tenants. In Iowa, where land is exceedingly high, the last census revealed an actual loss of population.

I regard high-priced land in a nation a great deal as physicians regard high blood-pressure in a human body—as a danger sign. I should, therefore, go energetically about it to remove the danger—which is, I believe, the private ownership of land for exploitive purposes. I should urge the congress to enact a law under the terms of which the government should immediately acquire, at the cost of the buildings and farm machinery, every farm owned by one individual and rented by another, and also every farm operated by a corporation.

I should not be in favor of disturbing by governmental purchase any farmer who is tilling his own land. But in another way I should try to disturb every farmer who is tilling his own land. I should try to disturb him by illustrating to him how much better it would be to have the ownership of all farm lands lie in the government. I should urge the congress to erect good, comfortable modern houses and barns on such tenant farms as the government might acquire. I should urge that such farms be equipped with all needed farm machinery, and that of the best kind. I should let such farms be used upon the payment of a small sum annually to cover depreciation of buildings and farm machinery. I should charge nothing for the use of the land.

### Efficiency Not the Only Thing

I BELIEVE that such freedom of movement would take away some of the drudgery of farm life. I believe it would do the California farmer good to farm in New York for a while, and I believe it would do the New York farmer good to farm in California for a while. Something might or might not be lost in efficiency. But efficiency is not the only thing in this world that is worth while. The enjoyment of life is worth something.

I should not be in favor of compelling the farmer who operates his own farm to sell it to the government. But my constant purpose would be to illustrate the advantages to be derived by operating farms owned by the United States, where everything from houses to hoes were supplied by the government. My ideal would be a farm owned by the United States government for every citizen of the United States who might wish to operate one and every farm in the country owned by the government.

I should work toward this ideal because I believe that agriculture must ever be the foundation of our prosperity; that capital is necessary to make it "pay"; and that the small farmer, operating upon the competitive basis, can not often accumulate the necessary capital. Moreover, I believe that everybody in this country should have the right to make a living by applying his labor to the soil. We have here enough land to support in comfort ten times our present population. Only the law prevents us from using it; therefore, I would change the law.

I should pay little or no attention to the foreign commerce of the United States. I should pay every attention to the domestic consumption of the United States. I should proceed upon the theory that, in so far as material things can conduce to our happiness, we are made happy, not by what we ship abroad, but by what we consume at home. We have in this country every important raw material that we require. I would put the energy of this government back of the task of developing our national resources to the full measure of our needs. I would have the government become a gigantic householder, a gigantic furniture manufacturer, a gigantic food producer—a gigantic maker and distributor of everything material that is necessary to life and happiness. So long as there was an unfulfilled need that a factory could fill, I would have the government build more factories. I should consider it a reflection upon my administration and upon the Socialist party if, after the enactment of our program, there were in America a hungry child, an involuntarily idle man, or a woman working for ten dollars a week.

I would have the government industrially big, but I would have the people politically bigger. I should urge laws under which the people

could throw me upon my back at any moment, as well as any other man or body of men connected with the administration of the government. I should urge that the people be given the power, to recall, at any moment, any and every public servant. I should urge that the people be given the right, by direct ballot, to enact and repeal laws. I believe in the democratic, both in politics and in industry. Either the people have the absolute right to rule everything connected with the government, or they have a right to rule nothing.

Instead of building battleships, I should try to get rid of things that bring battleships into use. I should urge congress to abandon all of our colonial possessions and back up on to this continent where we belong, and where, if attacked, we should be strongest in defense. I would take no chance of having to wage a war 8000 miles away from home.

### Monroe Doctrine Should Be Abandoned

I SHOULD abandon the Monroe Doctrine at the earliest possible moment. It was enacted to safeguard our peace, but it has become one of the greatest menaces to our peace. It has become little more than a fuse hanging from our window. Any passer-by can light it. It takes from us and gives to others the power to say whether we shall remain at peace. We might ultimately have war if some European nation should colonize South America; but we should surely have instant war if we should try to prevent it. I am not aware that it would be a much greater undertaking to bring an army from Europe to the United States than from South America to the United States, and therefore I do not believe that keeping European governments out of South America adds anything to our security. Moreover, I am not so attached to the Mexicans that I believe we should have fared worse if the French had remained in Mexico when they went in under Napoleon III.

I concede the right of all peoples to self-government; in fact, I assert it. It would be morally wrong for any nation to try to force its government upon any other people. But no nation can wisely undertake to stop all the moral wrongs that are taking place in the world. I believe we should safeguard our own peace, and let the rest of the world get along as best it can. Nationally speaking, the Don Quixote role does not appeal to me. Let us cease wronging other nations—as we wronged Panama, for instance, when President Roosevelt "took" the Canal Zone—before we trouble ourselves too much about preventing other nations from wronging South and Central Americans.

### Preparedness for Defense Only

I BELIEVE I have indicated a number of ways in which a Socialist government could diminish the likelihood of war, the most important of which is the removal of competition with other governments for the world's markets. A nation interested only in domestic production and consumption need not concern itself with exports and is therefore in less danger of attack. Still, such a nation might be attacked.

Some capitalist nation might wish to destroy the object lesson to humanity that we should be giving on this side of the Atlantic. I should be in favor of welcoming such invaders, if they should come, with anchored mines that could be exploded with electricity from shore, with submarines, and with land fortifications. A thousand submarines would cost no more than a few dreadnoughts, yet, if they were stationed at convenient points along our coasts, transports would hardly venture near. Anchored mines are the things along the German coast that have long kept the British navy away. Great Britain does not try to remove them with her mine-sweepers. German submarines and land guns prevent. Believing as I do in defense, but not in aggression, I should advocate weapons that are best for defense but worthless for aggression. Such are anchored mines, coast submarines, and land fortifications.

I should not expect to do all of these things in a minute. Yet it is not so big a task as it seems. Germany, France and Great Britain have taken over the control of many of their greatest industries in the last twenty months, and, in addition, have played their several parts in a tremendous war. I believe a Socialist administration in four years should make this country the wonder, the admiration, and the envy of the world.

### GEMS FROM THE BIBLE.

For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

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