

Conference for Progressive Political Action Platform, 1924*

For 148 years the American people have been seeking to establish a government for the service of all and to prevent the establishment of a government for the mastery of the few. Free men of every generation must combat renewed efforts of organized force and greed to destroy liberty. Every generation must wage a new war for freedom against new forces that seek through new devices to enslave mankind.

Under our representative democracy the people protect their liberties through their public agents.

The test of public officials and public polities alike must be: Will they serve or will they exploit the common need?

The reactionary continues to put his faith in mastery for the solution of all problems. He seeks to have what he calls the strong men and best minds rule and impose their decisions upon the masses of their weaker brethren.

The progressive, on the contrary, contends for less autocracy and more democracy in government, for less power of privilege and greater obligations of service.

Under the principle of ruthless individualism and competition, that government is deemed best which offers to the few the greatest chance of individual gain.

Under the progressive principle of cooperation, that government is deemed best which offers to the many the highest level of average happiness and well being.

It is our faith that we all go up or down together--that class gains are temporary delusions and that eternal laws of compensation make every man his brother's keeper.

PROGRAM OF PUBLIC SERVICE

In that faith we present our program of public service:

- (1) The use of the power of the federal government to crush private monopoly, not to foster it.
- (2) Unqualified enforcement of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, press, and assemblage.
- (3) Public ownership of the nation's water power and creation of a public super-power system. Strict public control and permanent conservation of all natural resources, including coal, iron, and other ores, oil, and timber lands in the interest of the people. Promotion of public works in times of business depression.
- (4) Retention of surtax on swollen incomes, restoration of the tax on excess profits, taxation of stock dividends, profits undistributed to evade taxes, rapidly progressive taxes on large estates and inheritances, and repeal of excessive tariff duties, especially on trust-controlled necessities of life and of nuisance taxes on consumption, to relieve the people of the present unjust burden of taxation and compel those who profited by the war to pay their share of the war's cost, and to provide the funds for adjusted compensation solemnly pledged to the veterans of the World War.

- (5) Reconstruction of the federal reserve and federal farm loan systems to provide for direct public control of the nation's money and credit to make it available on fair terms to all, and national and state legislation to permit and promote cooperative banking.
- (6) Adequate laws to guarantee to farmers and industrial workers the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing for the maintenance or improvement of their standard of life.
- (7) Creation of a government marketing corporation to provide a direct route between farm producer and city consumer and to assure farmers fair prices for their products, and protect consumers from the profiteers in foodstuffs and other necessities of life. Legislation to control the meat-packing industry.
- (8) Protection and aid of cooperative enterprises by national and state legislation.
- (9) Common international action to effect the economic recovery of the world from the effects of the World War.
- (10) Repeal of the Cummins-Esch law. Public ownership of railroads, with democratic operation, and with definite safeguards against bureaucratic control.
- (11) Abolition of the tyranny and usurpation of the courts, including the practice of nullifying legislation in conflict with the political, social or economic theories of the judges. Abolition of injunctions in labor disputes and of the power to punish for contempt without trial by jury. Election of all federal judges without party designation for limited terms.
- (12) Prompt ratification of the child labor amendment and subsequent enactment of a federal law to protect children in industry. Removal of legal discriminations against women by measures not prejudicial to legislation necessary for the protection and for the advancement of social welfare.
- (13) A deep waterway from the great lakes to the sea.
- (14) We denounce the mercenary system of degraded foreign policy under recent administrations in the interests of financial imperialists, oil monopolists and international bankers, which has at times degraded our State Department from its high service as a strong and kindly intermediary of defenseless governments to a trading outpost for those interests and concession seekers engaged in the exploitation of weaker nations, as contrary to the will of the American people, destructive of domestic development and provocative of war. We favor an active foreign policy to bring about a revision of the Versailles treaty in accordance with the terms of the armistice, and to promote firm treaty agreements with all nations to outlaw wars, drastically reduce land, air and naval armaments and guarantee public referendum on peace and war.

In supporting this program we are applying to the needs of today the fundamental principles of American democracy, opposing equally the dictatorship of plutocracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We appeal to all Americans without regard to partisan affiliation and we raise the standards of our faith so that all of like purpose may rally and march in this campaign under the banners of progressive union.

The nation may grow rich in the vision of greed. The nation will grow great in the vision of service.

*This is the platform of the Progressive Party of 1924. It reflects for us the persistence of the democratic statist vision of achieving greater democracy and equality of income, wealth, and power through more activist government. From *National Party Platforms, vol. 1, 1840-1956*. Comp. Donald Bruce Johnson (1956,1978)