

SOCIALIST ACTION

Membership Handbook



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So, you're thinking about joining Socialist Action, but want to know more about us. Well then you've come to the right place! This membership handbook will outline what it means to be a member of Socialist Action. We encourage everyone interested in joining our organization to carefully read over this document, along with our current Political Resolution. After reading through these two documents, we will arrange for you to meet and talk with one of our organizers to answer any questions you may still have, and to talk to you about becoming a provisional member.

Who We Are

Socialist Action is a political party, but we are different from all other political parties in the United States. We are a revolutionary multi-racial party of workers, students, youth, feminists and human rights activists.

Our party is committed to the task of nothing less than saving humanity from capitalism! We are a party that fights for workers' democracy and socialism, for human needs not profits – for the full liberation of workers and oppressed peoples everywhere!

Our Program in a Nutshell

🚩 **Class Struggle & Independence:** We believe that the world is divided into opposing social classes, and that the main driving force of modern history is the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class. We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working class politics – not alliances with the capitalists, or any wing of that class. That is why we call for workers to break from the Democratic Party to build a Labor Party based on the trade unions. In all of our political work we seek to get workers to see and think of themselves in terms of class, and to recognize that their class interests are diametrically opposed to that of the capitalists.

🚩 **Revolution vs. Reform:** We believe that the state and all of its institutions are instruments of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class, but have to be smashed. That is why we fight for revolution, instead of for seeking to merely reform or work within the system. When we fight for specific reforms we do so only with the understanding that in the final analysis real social change can only come about with the overthrow of capitalism, and the establishment of a workers' government. We seek to link the demands for reforms with revolution through the [Transitional Program](#) and its method.

🚩 **The Specially Oppressed & Oppressed Nationalities:** We support the struggles of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism – women, queers, national minorities, etc. We support and help build autonomous movements for the oppressed so that they can articulate their own demands, and develop political consciousness as a group. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos & Puerto Ricans.

🚩 **Internationalism:** While we support the nationalism of oppressed nationalities as progressive, we are internationalists, and as such we hold that the workers of one country have more in common with the workers of another than they do with their own nation's capitalist class. We oppose the nationalism of oppressor nationalities as wholly reactionary. We seek to link the struggles of workers and oppressed across national boundaries, and to build an international revolutionary movement that will facilitate the sharing of experiences and political lessons from one country with revolutionaries in another. That is why we maintain fraternal relations with the Fourth International.

🚩 **Vanguard Party:** The capitalist class is highly organized, and to overthrow it the working class likewise needs organization. We believe in the need for a disciplined party of professional revolutionaries based on a political program that incorporates the lessons of past working class victories and defeats. The class struggle ebbs and flows – to maintain continuity and to be prepared for openings in the class

struggle there is a need for an organization of always-active revolutionaries. We believe within such a party there must be complete and fair discussion and democracy, and the right to even form factions and tendencies to fight for your ideas. However, these democratically made decisions (the party line) must be binding on all members, and the party has to act as a common unit in carrying out the decided upon line in order to test if it is correct or not. This is called democratic-centralism.

🚩 **United Fronts:** Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers' movement, as well as the low level of class consciousness that exists among many workers, we seek to form united fronts, and united front type organizations, around specific issues where various groups have agreement with us. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and the number of forces that can be mobilized around a given issue, demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action as opposed to symbolic small-scale and individual actions, and expose others on the left and the workers' movement to our method of functioning and our political program. We also see this as the way of achieving meaningful revolutionary regroupment – because it allows different groups to work together and see whether or not they have significant political convergence. It should also be said that while we support the tactic of the united front, we are opposed to popular fronts – multi-class alliances that subordinate the interests of workers to that of a wing of the capitalist class.

🚩 **Permanent Revolution:** This famous theory by Leon Trotsky holds that revolution in modern times, even in under-developed countries, has to be led by the working class and has to be a fully fledged socialist revolution – revolution cannot go through stages and cannot be made in alliance with any wing of the capitalist class. To be ultimately successful it also needs to be an international revolution. We believe that a successful socialist revolution will result in a workers' government that is based on elected workers' councils.

What Are the Requirements of Membership?

Inside Socialist Action complete equality is practiced. Every member enjoys the same rights, privileges and duties. Membership is open to anyone who:

- 🚩 Accepts and is in general agreement with our political program;
- 🚩 Who agrees to abide by majority rule;
- 🚩 Who seeks to build and is loyal to the party;
- 🚩 Who agrees to engage actively in the party's work and materially support it.

Dues are \$5 a month. In addition to these monthly dues though, every member is encouraged to make a voluntary weekly contribution according to what they can afford. Sympathizers of the party – those who for whatever reason are unable to be fully active members – are also encouraged to make regular financial contributions. This is how Socialist Action is financed. In contrast to the capitalist parties, we are not supported by large contributions (or small!) by corporations. Our newspaper is not financed with business advertisements. This is one way we maintain our political independence, and remain firmly committed to the interests of the working class.

Members are also encouraged to be mindful that our activity does not go unnoticed by the ruling class of this country, and that we must be careful not to give them any pretext to interrupt our work or go after our members. That is why we strongly discourage comrades from engaging in any illegal activity, and to be conscious of security when making personal choices.

Applicants for membership in Socialist Action are asked to go through a three-month provisional membership period. This way you are able to come into the organization to get a real feel for what it is like to better enable you to decide if membership is for you. If need be, provisional membership can be

expanded beyond three months.

What Is It Like Inside of the Party?

Socialist Action is divided into branches. A branch is five members or more living in a given locality that works as a common unit. New members are assigned to a branch when they join if one exists in their area. If there isn't a branch there yet they become "at-large members" and remain so until enough members have been recruited in their area to form a regular branch.

It is inside the branch that much of Socialist Action's life takes place. It's also where your education as a revolutionary socialist really begins. Within it you learn the fundamentals of Marxist theory. You are encouraged to deepen and broaden your understanding by diligent study and, in the course of working with the party in its campaigns, by putting what you learn into practice. Training in public speaking and writing is fostered and encouraged. Within the branch comrades discuss the many events unfolding within the world, and how we should respond and intervene in them.

The aim in all of this is a practical one – to educate every party member so that they will be a self-thinking, self-acting revolutionary. The party is a school for professional revolutionaries. Our goal is to build a party of skilled activists in the service of the working class. Each member is a valuable trainee, preparing for a key role in helping the workers to guide America to socialism.

How Decisions Are Made

Full democracy governs the party in reaching its decisions. Party branches meet regularly to discuss, plan and vote on how to go about its practical work. Every member has the right to speak and make their case.

In the same way, decisions that are made nationally, such as important political questions on what our overall position or orientation on a given question will be, are decided by the membership.

The highest decision making body of the party is the convention. Our constitution mandates that a convention be held at least once every other year, though they can be held more frequently if the need arises.

Conventions are preceded by a pre-convention discussion period which lasts several months. During this time comrades can submit their views to everyone else through the Internal Discussion Bulletin (IDB). The branches also organize oral discussions where the different viewpoints from the IDB can be debated. Then branches elect delegates to attend a national convention where the different positions are again debated and finally voted on.

During this whole process comrades with a minority viewpoint are given every opportunity to present and argue for their position. They can hook up with co-thinkers and form organized tendencies or factions to fight for their views. They are allowed time to present counter-reports on disputed questions during the branch and convention discussions. And once all is said and done, and the vote is taken, comrades with minority viewpoints are given representation on the party's national bodies and are in no way punished for their views.

Once a discussion is over, and the majority of comrades have agreed on a given question, that decision becomes binding on all. Comrades with minority viewpoints have to subordinate their differences in public and loyally do their best to make the common decision a success. This is the way decisions are tested in action. If the minority is not convinced by the majority's position during its application between conventions ("the test of life"), then they can again bring up their position in the next regular discussion period.

Full internal democracy gives the party great cohesiveness when decisions are made and the minority joins with the majority in carrying them out. This method of organization (which is called “democratic centralism”) ensures that the party will continue to be a party of action. At the same time, it gives everyone full opportunity to present her or his viewpoint, to criticize, discuss and win adherents to their position.

At the end of party conventions the delegates elect a National Committee. The National Committee is responsible for carrying out the decisions of the party in between conventions. It in turn elects a Political Committee from its ranks to guide the party between National Committee meetings. The National Committee also selects party leaders, such as the National Secretary.

Party Membership Builds a New Outlook

Life inside Socialist Action is active and stimulating. Your horizon constantly widens as your understanding of Marxism grows. The emphasis on the long-range view and the great emancipating goal of socialism lifts you out of the stifling, dreary existence that is imposed on working people by capitalism. You become part of a group of people whose lives are tied in with the magnificent potential future that lies before humanity.

As a member of Socialist Action, intense political activity keeps you young in mind, and resilient in outlook. You're always on the lookout to make a difference, to reach people and help them become part of the movement for the emancipation of the working class. And there are so many avenues the party's work will take you: selling the party's newspaper, distributing leaflets, organizing meetings, writing, public speaking, getting the party on the ballot, collecting funds or fighting for progressive aims within the labor, Black, women's, or other social movements.

Keep in mind though that at times the going is hard. Tough moral fiber is required to stand up to the abuse and misunderstanding that comes from the corrupt and the ignorant.

But there are also great compensations. You gain the respect and admiration from your co-workers for your integrity, your progressive outlook and your unselfishness. In your workplace, campus, or among your friends, your opinions are sought out. Your life takes on significance and meaning because you are part of the movement fighting for a better tomorrow. You will live the inspiring life of a revolutionary socialist!

And above all, you win your freedom from capitalist miseducation. You see things more clearly. You are no longer puzzled and bewildered by the big events that suck whole nations and continents into their vortex. You understand them and why, and you are no longer powerless to do anything about it.

The Wrap-Up Pitch!

Socialism is the only road leading away from poverty, inflation, unemployment, imperialist war, totalitarianism – all the worldwide scourges of decaying capitalism. In the final analysis, only socialism can save humanity from capitalist barbarism and create a just new world. The most courageous people, those capable of the greatest sacrifices, those intelligent enough to see the task and endowed with the will to carry it out, must take the lead. Only such people will do so.

That is the historic responsibility which Socialist Action has taken upon itself. When future ages look back at this time, they will judge our generation by the way it responded to this grave obligation.

We believe there is no better life than participating to the best of your ability in the struggle for socialism. We in Socialist Action invite you to join us in this fight for a better world!