

READING

Platform of the Workingmen's Party of California (1877)

Please note that this reading contains certain racial epithets. We have chosen to include them in order to honestly communicate the bigoted language of the time.

The object of this Association is to unite all poor and working men and their friends into one political party, for the purpose of defending themselves against the dangerous encroachments of capital on the happiness of our people and the liberties of our country.

- We propose to wrest the government from the hands of the rich and place it in those of the people, where it properly belongs.
- We propose to rid the country of cheap Chinese labor as soon as possible, and by all the means in our power, because it tends still more to degrade labor and aggrandize capital.
- We propose to destroy land monopoly in our state by such laws as will make it impossible.
- We propose to destroy the great money power of the rich by a system of taxation that will make great wealth impossible in the future.
- We propose to provide decently for the poor and unfortunate, the weak, the helpless, and especially the young, because the country is rich enough to do so, and religion, humanity, and patriotism demand that we should do so.
- We propose to elect none but competent workingmen and their friends to any office whatever. The rich have ruled us until they have ruined us. We will now take our own affairs in our own hands. The republic must and shall be preserved, and only workingmen will do it. Our shoddy aristocrats want an emperor and a standing army to shoot down the

people.

- For these purposes, we propose to organize ourselves into the Workingmen's Party of California, and to pledge and enroll therein all who are willing to join us in accomplishing these ends.
- When we have 10,000 members, we shall have the sympathy and support of 20,000 other workingmen.
- The party will then wait upon all who employ Chinese and ask for their discharge, and it will mark as public enemies those who refuse to comply with their request.
- This party will exhaust all peaceable means of attaining its ends, but it will not be denied justice when it has the power to enforce it. It will encourage no riot or outrage, but it will not volunteer to repress, or put down, or arrest, or prosecute the hungry and impatient who manifest their hatred of the Chinamen by a crusade against "John" or those who employ him. let those who raise the storm by their selfishness, suppress it themselves. If they dare raise the devil, let them meet him face to face. We will not help them ...¹

¹ Quoted in Ira Brown Cross, [*A History of the Labor Movement in California*](#), vol. 14 (University of California Press, 1935), 96-97.