

THE SOCIALISM OF TO-DAY

A SOURCE-BOOK OF THE PRESENT POSITION
AND RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE SO-
CIALIST AND LABOR PARTIES IN ALL COUN-
TRIES, CONSISTING MAINLY OF ORIGINAL
DOCUMENTS

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9. Pensions for widows and orphans.
10. Payment of cadets for work on holidays.
11. Superannuation scheme for public service.
12. Grants for investigation and treatment of consumption, cancer, and syphilis.
13. Commonwealth insurance department.
14. Vague measure to cope with trusts and monopolies.

Such a program shows an appreciation of the point of view of the average elector which amounts to genius, but it is a curious production for a Socialist Party in the twentieth century. Observe how social and industrial problems are overlooked. It is true that the rejection of the referenda, by which labor sought extended powers, impairs the scope of the labor platform, but a "stand-pat" attitude on industrial questions is not desirable. The fact is that labor is not tackling the problems which previous Liberal-Labor legislation has raised. This legislation cannot be regarded as a complete solution of social difficulties. Its virtue is that by disclosing nearer and more subtle problems it brings us closer to the real issues which have to be faced before a solution is arrived at. . . .

It is to be feared that we have reached a stage in which the Labor Party regards it as more important that it should hold the reins of power than that it should trouble itself with a host of problems of great complexity. The man of advanced views can afford now to pass the Labor Party and look to what will supersede it with a more virile and up-to-date set of ideas. At a time when the utility of political machinery is being challenged no class of people is less likely than the Australian worker to be content with a "stand-pat" party. It was not as a party of prudence but as a propagandist idealist body that the Labor Party achieved success, and if it abandons this side of its efforts it is not likely to remain useful or trusted. The Australian loves change and recognizes no vested interest in the existing order. Any definite and intelligent attempt at social readjustment would secure support.

II. FROM THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY REPORT TO THE PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST CONGRESS TO HAVE BEEN HELD AT VIENNA IN 1914

Until quite recently Australia depended mostly upon primary products for the income and profits of its owners, the capitalist class. Now, however, the development of the factory system is taking place with increasing rapidity; and according to some figures just compiled by the government statistician of New South Wales—the oldest and leading state of the Commonwealth—the number of factories and employees are increasing out of all proportion to the increase of population. The land monopolist in the country has, in addition to the old system of rack-renting, established a system of share-farming, under which he takes in good seasons anything from one-third of the farmer's crop upwards. This system of peonage is having its effect in forcing men off the land into the towns and cities, to swell the number of factory employees and the army of unemployed in each state.

According to the N. S. W. statistician's figures, wages in the factories have risen nine per cent, which works out at about £5 per head, but the cost of living has gone up more than twenty per cent, so that the workers have suffered a serious reduction. The rents workers have to pay astonish those who come from older lands, and have risen so rapidly during the last two years that the overcrowding in the slums has become a scandal and disgrace.

Meanwhile, governments—both Liberal and Labor—are scouring the globe for more people. Lying advertisements are widely circulated in Europe to induce innocent people to come to this country, who, when they arrive, are sadly disillusioned by finding the class struggle more bitterly waged than they thought could be possible.

To attract population, the various state governments advertise widely certain advantages which labor is alleged to possess. One of these is the industrial legislation of the country, which is said to be the most up to date and most favorable to the workers of any legislation in the world. Part of this claim is founded upon our system of arbitration, which was specially designed to do away with strikes and industrial unrest.

In each of the six states of the Commonwealth arbitration courts and wages boards exist for the settlement of industrial disputes, and if such a dispute spreads from one state to another there is a federal arbitration court to which the parties to the dispute may be summoned.

Originally industrial arbitration was advocated and popularized by the Political Labor Party, and it took several years before it could be passed into law. The employing class were very suspicious of it, but once it became law they saw how it benefited them, and they are now quite enthusiastic in its support. Socialists warned the workers from the first that arbitration courts and wages boards would fail to affect the class struggle in a way that would be beneficial to them. The majority still fail to see this, but there are more strikes than ever, which justifies our contention and proves that our warning was timely.

Wages boards are presided over by a chairman, who is generally either a lawyer or a member of the employing class appointed by the state government. Before this chairman, who often has no practical knowledge, an equal number of working-class and capitalist representatives argue the dispute and produce evidence. When the cost of living goes up, the board usually recognizes the fact, and makes an award in favor of increased wages. This is done after much forensic fighting and expenditure of unionist money, and the result in most cases could have been arrived at by the workers themselves with solidarity and proper organization.

When an award has been made strikes and lockouts become illegal, and many workers have been fined for striking. When fines are inflicted upon the workers they are recoverable by the state by means of the garnishee. The workers are not imprisoned for non-payment of fines, but when they recommence work their wages are confiscated to pay the fines and costs. The garnishee was invented by the New South Wales Labor Government, and was quickly adopted by the Liberal governments of other states.

Besides providing for the garnishee, the Industrial Arbitration Act makes it a penal offense to advocate a strike or to assist those on strike with monetary or other material support. The authorities may take drastic steps to break a strike. They may enter a unionist meeting hall and seize the union's books and papers, and in the last great coal strike the government seized

trainloads of coal which the miners had taken from a mine they had rented.

But with all its drastic features, industrial arbitration is a failure, and the Labor politicians are directing the workers to make an attack on trusts and combines as the cause of rising prices and industrial unrest. *They have failed to make wages boards raise wages as the cost of living rose, so are aiming to bring the cost of living down by an attack on prices.* (Our italics.)

In this sham fight against the trusts the Federal Labor Party leads the way. . . . During its term of office the Federal Labor Party administered the class state on lines laid down by previous capitalist governments, and even went further in some directions than any other capitalist government would dare to go. The result was that last year it was hurled from office by a small majority. It had lost the big majority of three years previously, and a good deal of the confidence of its own supporters.

There are many causes that contributed to the downfall of the Labor Party, but one or two main ones need only be mentioned here. As soon as they found themselves in power members of the party commenced to win the confidence of the small employers and traders, a class which is notoriously ignorant, loyal, and grasping.

Perhaps the pledging of the conscript forces to assist in foreign aggression did more to disillusion many than anything else. The party as a whole had been led to believe that the conscripts were only to be used for home defense and the maintenance of a white Australia, yet the leaders had pledged their support to the imperial expansionists.

When the labor leaders returned from the coronation celebrations there was a marked change in them. The aristocrats had done their work, and probably the armament firms had not been without their influence. Orders were placed for battleships and an era of military and naval activity entered upon.

Recent strikes in England, New Zealand, and South Africa, where all available forces were used to defeat the workers, have tended to decrease the belief in conscription, and at the Federal Labor Conference, and also in the Federal Senate, attempts have been made to so amend the act that the conscripts could not be used for strike-breaking purposes.

The objective of the Labor Party has, since its inception,

undergone a gradual but definite modification. It appears now to be aiming at state capitalism. Money is being freely borrowed from European financiers with which to start state enterprises, the profits from which are to be spent to pay interest on loans and to build a navy and an army to defend the financiers' interests. A sham fight against trusts and combines is maintained.

An attack in the courts upon the coal combine was prosecuted even to the Privy Council in England, where it was, of course, defeated by the very interests on trial.

Most of the trades-unions of Australia have hitherto been affiliated with the Political Labor League which selects the parliamentary candidates and frames the platform. The league has been practically captured by the small capitalists and employers, whose leaders are inveterate boodlers and men on the make. Several have signified their political successes by building palatial mansions in fashionable quarters and by aping the manners, customs, and style of the ordinary capitalist snobocracy. This is having a marked effect on many unionists, some of whom are rushing into anarchist and other anti-political organizations in opposition to the P. L. L. A significant disposition on the part of a more moderate section in the unions has been a recent attempt at the formation of a trade-union political party, which should exclude employers and small capitalists from parliamentary representation. Another fact, significant of the declining faith in the old P. L. L. leaders, has been the opposition to the levy struck by unions to found a daily paper.

The Australasian Socialist Party is opposed to every form of militarism, and refuses to draw the color line. Its organ, *The International Socialist*, has fought both the capitalist and laborite press on these matters, and a good deal of educational work has been done in union circles by its articles and consistent attack.

A false impression has been created abroad by the capitalist press, which constantly refers to the Labor Party as a Socialist Party. The Labor Party is not a Socialist Party. It is really a Liberal Party, and stands for much the same as the Liberal Party of Great Britain does. It stands for a big navy and for land taxation, just as Liberals like Lloyd-George and Winston Churchill do. It stands for a loan policy and a huge charge for interest, just as both the old parties in Britain do. It fathered

and adheres to conscription just as firmly as the National Service League does in Britain, and in this respect is more conservative than British Liberals are. It rejects the class struggle and claims to represent all classes, but never neglects to side with the employers in industrial conflicts. Its objective is really state capitalism. There is not a member of the Socialist Party in any Parliament in the Commonwealth. Socialists who have contested elections as Socialists have always been defeated. . . .

(See also "Militarism," "Compulsory Arbitration," "Immigration," and "The Race Question.")