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# THE COMMUNIST REVIEW

Vol. 2

SYDNEY, N.S.W.

No. 4

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**APRIL ISSUE—SIXPENCE**

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*A Magazine of the Theory and Practice of  
Marxism-Leninism.*

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# The Communist Review

Vol. 2, No. 4

SYDNEY, N.S.W.

April, 1935

## The Chinese Revolution

By L. SHARKEY

The eyes of the world are more and more drawn towards the great revolution unfolding itself in China. Recent events have not only caused the revolutionary working class of the world to follow with keenest attention the struggle of Soviet China and the Red Army, but the imperialists are more openly taking over the direction of the counter-revolutionary war waged against the Chinese Soviets by the Kuomintang, and themselves hasten to openly participate, to rush imperialist gunboats to every point threatened by the advance of the Red Army. At the same time, "atrocities" stories against the Chinese revolution, mainly centring around missionaries, are becoming the everyday propaganda of the bourgeois press. It is an authenticated fact that such killings of missionaries as have taken place are the work of the innumerable bandit groups that have arisen in China as the consequence of their dispossession from the land and the break-up of the old social order. But it is convenient for the capitalist press to blame it on to the Communists as a means of incitement against the Chinese revolution and also as an attempt to discredit Communism in the minds of workers who still have religious illusions. That is not to say that the Revolutionary Government of China is not justified in executing, nor will ever execute missionaries. These missionaries are often spies and agents, advance guards, of the counter-revolution, of the Kuomintang and the imperialists participating in the war against the Chinese people. As such, as political counter-revolutionaries, they will be dealt with by the revolutionary law of the Chinese Soviet Republic; they will answer for their crimes against the Chinese people before the tribunals of proletarian justice.

To understand the Chinese revolution, we must view it in historical perspective as a process already extending over decades. Lenin wrote immediately after the 1905 uprising in Russia that one of the achievements of this revolutionary struggle was the impetus that it gave "to the Chinese, Persian, and Turkish revolutions."

A brief mention of the outstanding events symbolising the processes at work within the greatest single aggregation of humanity includes the overthrow of the Empire and the exiling of the "Son of Heaven" and the establishment of the Republic in 1912, followed by the brief seizure of the throne by Yuan Shih Kai, who was soon disposed of and put to death.

The deposition of the Emperor did not alter things greatly. The power fell into the hands of the feudal militarists in each province, the so-called "warlords," of whom the most outstanding were Chang Tso Lin in Manchuria, Chang Chung Chang and others in the North, Sun Chuan Fang at Shanghai, Wu Pei Fu at Hankow, and others. China was rent and torn for a long period by the wars which these rival militarists waged upon each other without cessation, and instances of which are still occurring.

But behind this, the forces of the rising classes in China, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, were gathering their strength for the struggle to overthrow the old mediæval social system and the power of the "warlords." The outstanding leader of the bourgeois revolution in China, its organiser and theoretician, was the late Dr. Sun Yat Sen, who spent a lifetime fighting for the realisation of bourgeois power in China. Whilst Sun had, no doubt, some Socialist leanings, and a great admiration and respect for Comrade Lenin, he never rose to the level of a Marxist-Leninist understanding of the laws of social development.

As a result of the activities of Sun and his colleagues was witnessed the rise of the bourgeois-national revolutionary party, the Kuomintang. With the aid of the Communists, the Kuomintang organisation at Canton made preparations and finally organised an expedition for the purpose of overthrowing the "warlords" and abolishing the mediæval social structure. This undertaking, as I have mentioned, was supported by the Communists, and the names of Borodin and also Bluecher are often mentioned in connection with this support. The Communists, in giving this support, stood firmly on the principles of Marx as expressed in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," where he

states that the Communists always support the bourgeoisie where it fights in a revolutionary way, that is, for the overthrow of feudalism, for the democratic republic, and so on.

The Kuomintang and Dr. Sun at this period not only propagated these objectives, but were strongly anti-imperialist and proclaimed the national war of Chinese independence against the imperialists. At this stage the Kuomintang was progressive, and for this reason received the support of the proletarian revolutionaries. The counter-revolutionary Trotsky tries very hard to misrepresent the position of the Third International towards the Kuomintang at this period, but to Marxists the attitude towards national revolutionary wars and bourgeois revolutions is not capable of misconstruction, and was clearly defined in the "Manifesto" by Marx and Engels, and developed by them and by Lenin in relation to such struggles since 1848.

This campaign was inaugurated by the Hong Kong seamen's strike, which was one of the most effective in history, by a national boycott of imperialist goods and by peasant uprisings. The military expedition was very successful. The "warlords," Wu Pei Fu, Sun Chuan Fang, and Chang Chung Chang, were uprooted with the aid of strikes and risings of the proletariat in Shanghai, Hankow, and other towns in 1926-27.

The imperialists met the national revolution with the big guns of their "China squadrons." There was the Shameen massacre, the reduction of Wanh sien and other cities to ashes by the imperialists, in particular by the British, as at Wanh sien.

But the Chinese bourgeoisie in the Kuomintang became alarmed at the strength of the mass movement, which they felt threatened not only the imperialists and the warlords but all forms of exploitation and class rule, including that of the Chinese capitalists. Hence they decided to break with the masses, suppress the workers and peasants' movement, and for this purpose to seek the support of the imperialist Powers.

The Comintern foresaw the inevitable break between the bourgeoisie and the mass revolutionary movement, and repeatedly warned the Chinese Communists to prepare to meet it, sending a number of documents outlining the necessary measures—arming of the workers and peasants, work in the Kuomintang army, and so forth—in good time. Unfortunately, the C.P. of China was very weak at the time, and its leadership

showed opportunism in failing to carry out the Comintern's line which assisted Chiang Kai Shek, who had seized power, to deal blows at the workers and peasants.

Despite this, the revolution was by no means defeated. A great event took place, a rearguard action of the masses of great historical significance. That was the Canton Commune.

### THE CANTON COMMUNE

The following description of the Canton Commune is taken from the "China News," January, 1935, and was written on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the Commune:—

"Seven years ago took place the first decisive success of the Chinese Soviets. They were strong enough to take Canton, the second seaport of China. For three days they victoriously upheld Communism as the governing force, their banners inscribed with slogans of the proletarian revolution. The Canton Soviet was established and Su Chao-cheng was elected its chairman.

"At once the Commune proclaimed its revolutionary policy which, in spite of the fierce repression of the Kuomintang, has been resolutely pursued by the Chinese workers and peasants until to-day, when it is possible to say that one-sixth of China is under Soviet influence, even if the whole of this area is not yet under direct Soviet administration.

"November 26, 1927, was the date fixed to inaugurate the Revolutionary Military Council and establish the Red Guard headquarters. The Red Army Vanguard, the dare-to-die detachments, and Red Guards were formed among the workers. The plan of action for the revolt was decided upon. The Canton Soviet was formed of 10 worker delegates, 3 soldiers, and 3 peasants. The Soviet passed the decision and plan of revolt and ratified the instructions of the People's Council prepared for use when they came to power.

"At 3 a.m. on December 11 the revolt of the organised workers and soldiers commenced. An executive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and a representative of the People's Military Council conferred with the Training Regiment. Fifteen reactionary officers were shot. The hammer-and-sickle flags were hoisted, and the soldiers marched on the headquarters of the reactionary army and police.

"The workers' Red Guards and vanguard detachments, armed with revolvers and bombs, besieged the police bureau and the

gendarmes' barracks. The transport workers, as previously arranged, drove out their motor cars and lorries to the point fixed for helping the red fighters. An hour later the Police Bureau was occupied. With the aid of the further supplies of arms captured, they soon also occupied the barracks of the gendarmes. More rifles, machine-guns, and tanks were seized, and soon all the important places were occupied by the revolutionaries—telegraph office, post office, wireless station, barracks, police stations, headquarters of the Kuomintang, and all Government bureaux and offices. At the same time, the peasants occupied the North Station and other strategic points.

"After the victorious uprising, the Red Army was reorganised and the People's Soviet Council, executive organ of the Soviet, was formed. Comrade Su Chao-cheng was elected chairman.

"The council at once declared the 8-hour working day in all industries, and the rights of the workers, of which they had been robbed, were restored to them. Workers were to control production and the People's Council guaranteed increased wages. The big privately owned factories, banks, and other enterprises were confiscated.

"The decision was taken to confiscate also the property of the wealthy landlords and to redistribute the land among the peasants; burn all contracts of usury; destroy all landmarks; abolish the inhuman taxation and build up Soviet power in the towns and villages. The soldiers were also to have a share of the land and the right to elect soldier delegates both outside and inside the army. Soldiers' wages were immediately increased from \$12 to \$20 a month, and a Workers and Peasants' Army was created.

"The Soviet Government issued the slogan of unity with the U.S.S.R. and the proletariat of the world to fight against imperialism.

"The Kuomintang armies of reaction, commanded by Chang Fa-kwei and powerfully assisted by Japanese, British, French, and American gunboats, which not only transported Kuomintang troops but covered their disembarkation, immediately attacked the Communist forces.

"In spite of the determination and heroic struggle of the workers and toiling masses, the Canton Commune existed for only three days. The Workers' Army was outnumbered ten to twenty times by the White mercenaries, and on the afternoon of the third day they had to retreat with very heavy losses. More

than 7000 workers and soldiers were killed during the White Terror which followed the defeat of the Commune.

"The causes of the fall of the Soviet Power, so valiantly won, are as follows:—

- (a) The Canton Soviet was not solidly united with the village peasants for common action. It was isolated.
- (b) The enemies were more powerful, better equipped, and occupied better strategical positions.
- (c) The White forces received help from the foreign imperialists.
- (d) The uprising took place during an ebb in the revolutionary tide in China.
- (e) Mistakes were made by the inexperienced Executive Committee.

"Though the Canton Commune was suppressed, its significance is very great. It was the first time in history that the Red Flag was hoisted in a semi-colonial country. It set a glorious example for the oppressed and exploited peoples of the world who are fighting against capitalism and imperialism. It shows how powerful the workers are. The lessons of the Canton Commune have been analysed, with the result that about one-sixth of China is now under workers and peasants' control. The blood which was shed by the heroes of the Canton Commune was not shed in vain."

The fall of Canton did not mean that the Chinese masses had finally failed in their attempt to grasp political power. On the contrary. Canton marked a new, higher stage—the Soviet stage—of the Chinese revolution. That is the view that the leading Communist theoreticians took of the events at Canton. This view has since been borne out by the fact that to-day one-sixth of the territory of China is ruled by the Soviets and that a terrific struggle is raging at the present moment which will decide whether the whole of China in the immediate future will become Soviet or otherwise. The fall of Canton did not mean the end of the Soviet revolution in China, because the horrible oppression and exploitation of the Chinese masses compels them to follow the revolutionary path. China, as Lenin previously pointed out in regard to Tsarist Russia, is to-day one of the chief focal points of the contradictions and antagonisms of imperialism. All of these contradictions are present in an aggravated form. There are the feudal remnants and feudal militarists side by side with developing capitalism, and, over all, imperialist domination.

converting China into a semi-colonial country, into a colony of international finance capital. There is the ruthless struggle between the competing imperialist Powers, Britain, Japan, and the U.S.A., and their endless intrigues against each other, which lead to open preparations for war in the Pacific, with the body of China as a part of the booty. Also there is the savage war of Japan against China.

All this results in the most hideous oppression of the masses. Reports of tens of millions perishing through hunger and cold, of whole provinces devastated in the internecine struggles of the militarists, who are each backed by one or other of the imperialist Powers, filter through. The mercenary soldiers carry off everything from the peasant cultivators, whilst as many as 30 different kinds of taxes have been collected in one province in the course of a year. The starving, dispossessed peasants turn in many instances to banditry, and burn and pillage in their turn. In the factories of Shanghai, Hankow, and the other industrial centres a hideous exploitation of the workers rules. Long hours, wages infinitesimal, and an incredible struggle to maintain the barest existence is the lot of the Chinese proletariat. Over all this is the horrible White Terror of Chiang Kai Shek, which has already accounted for the lives of 1,000,000 workers, peasants, and intellectuals, who have been tortured, executed, or rotted to death in the Kuomintang dungeons.

The intertwining contradictions of the dissolving Chinese social order, the growth of Chinese capitalism, the penetration of international capital and imperialist military overlordship, created the conditions for the continuation of the Chinese revolution, however great the cost. Social-Democracy cannot gain a foot-hold in Chinese conditions.

The hideous condition of the peasants results in the great agrarian revolution now transpiring in China. This agrarian revolution is led by the Party of the proletariat, the Chinese Communist Party. This basic agrarian revolution is the reason why Chiang Kai Shek, supported by the imperialists, cannot overcome the Soviets. Temporarily suppressed in one area, the Soviet power is immediately established in a neighboring locality by the revolting peasants, handicraftsmen, and workers, led by the Communists and the Red Army. So it was that, after Canton, the retreating Red detachments who escaped from the massacre, joined by other revolutionaries driven out by the White Terror from the great industrial centre on the Yangtse

April, 1935

River, Hankow, and elsewhere, penetrated the provinces of Fukien, Kiangsi, Chekiang, Honan, Hunan, Kweichow, Kansu, Anwei, and Szechwan in particular, where Soviet districts were established. These Soviet districts have been extended in a heroic war against the Kuomintang armies that has raged in these provinces for the years following the Canton Commune. Six campaigns for the "extermination of the Reds" have been launched by Chiang Kai Shek, who, in the latest one, has mobilised 1,000,000 men, who are provided by the imperialists with artillery, tanks, aeroplanes, and all forms of modern military equipment.

Each one of these Chiang-Imperialist expeditions has been successful in "wiping out the Reds," according to official Chinese propaganda, but the main result up to the present has been the development of the Soviet territory to the point where it embraces one-sixth of the total area of China and covers a population of 80 to 90 millions of people, and also the strengthening and better equipment of the Red Army by captured war material and deserting Kuomintang soldiery.

The Central Chinese Provisional Soviet Government was established in Kiangsi province, with its capital at Juikin, at a Congress of workers, peasants, and soldiers from all parts of China, in November, 1931. Comrade Mau Tse Tung was elected chairman; the Military Revolutionary Council was established to control all the Red forces, with Comrade Chu Deh at its head. The total Red fighting forces, Red Army regulars, Red Militia, etc., were stated to be 1,000,000 by Comrade Wan Min at the 13th Plenum of the E.C.C.I. Besides this, there are 300,000 partisans in Manchuria who are more and more directly led by the Chinese Communists in the struggle to liberate Manchuria from barbarous Japanese imperialism. These mighty fighting forces of the Chinese revolution are continuously growing and hardening in the struggle.

These immense forces give one an idea of the breadth and depth already attained by the Chinese anti-imperialist struggle and the Soviet revolution. The leaders of the Red Army offer to make a united front with all other Chinese armies for the purpose of driving out the Japanese from North China and the establishment of the 8-hour day and democratic rights for the Chinese masses. The Kuomintang, however, prefers to make war on the Red Armies, in co-operation with the Japanese invaders, thus betraying the Chinese nation.

The Chinese Provisional Soviet Government at once adopted a programme aiming at the liberation of the Chinese toilers. The 8-hour day was introduced, women were placed on a footing of equality and emancipated from the tyranny of age-old customs and practices, co-operation introduced, the land of the feudalists seized and distributed among the peasants and Red Army soldiers, a system of education introduced, cultivation of the poppy for the purpose of producing opium prohibited, better methods of cultivation introduced, the dykes damming flooded rivers and the irrigation systems repaired, as well as many other policies of a progressive character. The Congress declared a war of national independence of China against Japan, which rallies all of the anti-imperialist masses for the struggle against imperialism and to the side of the Soviets and the Red Army.

The Soviet Government of China is not yet a proletarian dictatorship. It has not yet a Socialist economy, although the beginnings of this exist in the industries already nationalised by the Chinese Soviet Government. Private trading is yet encouraged, because of the primitiveness of Chinese economy and as a means of speeding economic development.

It is a form of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." This dictatorship was visualised by Lenin as carrying out the democratic tasks that were allotted to the classic bourgeois revolutions of Europe, and, as economic, social, and political development proceeds, "growing over into the Socialist revolution." The democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was thus described by Lenin:

"The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry has, like everything else in the world, a past and a future. Its past was autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, privilege. . . . Its future will be the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage laborer against his master, the struggle for Socialism."—"Two Tactics," 1905.

"The council of workers and soldiers' deputies: here is life's concrete realisation of the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.'"—Lenin, "Revolutionary Lessons."

#### THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE RED ARMY

The present, the Sixth, Anti-Red Campaign was carefully prepared with the assistance of the German and Japanese mili-

tary strategists, in particular the Reichswehr general so beloved of German Social-Democracy, General von Seeckt. Its main blow was delivered at the centre of the Soviet regions in the province of Kiangsi, where some 600,000 troops were employed by the Kuomintang. It pursued a line of encirclement of the Red Army, a gradual advance accompanied by the building of strongholds, block-houses, in the captured Soviet territories, with a view to forcing the Red Army in Kiangsi into a corner and destroying it by the superior force of the equipment provided for the occasion by the imperialists. It was described by Comrade Mau Tse Tung as a policy "of catching the fish by drawing out the water."

The revolutionary leadership, however, took measures to meet this menace. Large forces of the Red Army were evacuated from Kiangsi into the neighbouring provinces of Hunan, Kweichow, and to capture in particular the huge and rich province of Szechwan. Other sections of the Red Army were already operating in these provinces, such as the army of Comrade Ho Lung. According to all reports, the manoeuvre of the Red Army from Kiangsi was successful and a junction effected with the forces of Ho Lung and other Red commanders. How much of the Soviet territory had to be surrendered in Kiangsi is not clear from the reports available, but the struggle still proceeds in that province as well as the adjoining coastal ones of Fukien and Chekiang, in which latter one of the Red armies is reported as despatched to fight the Japanese occupation. The main forces of the Red Army, however, at the present moment are concentrated in the interior of China, in Kweichow and Szechwan provinces in particular. Such changes in the positions of the Red armies are not new. More than two years ago the Red Army was compelled by the concentration of forces by the enemy to retreat from the Soviet territories in Honan, Hupeh, Anhwei, in similar fashion, but these territories have been recaptured for the most part for the Soviets.

The latest reports from the province of Szechwan show that an immense portion of this province of 60,000,000 people has been won for the Soviets and Chunking, the most important economic and political centre, was expected to fall to the Reds weeks ago. The message, printed in "Inprecor" for January 5, 1935, declares: "One may say that the whole front of the Kuomintang Army, consisting of six divisions with a total of 230,000 men, are retreating in disorder and disintegrating. (General) Liu Hsiang alone has lost more than 90,000 men of his forces, formerly

numbering 170,000 men." The province of Kweichow has pretty well come under the rule of the Soviets in the last few months, according to the same authority, and the same applies to a whole number of other districts in a whole number of provinces. The victories in these provinces of Inner China, with the base in Szechwan, opens up very favorable prospects of complete victory, because here economic and political affairs are in a state of utmost confusion, and here the imperialist warships are not so important in the struggle as in the coastal regions.

That the struggle rages furiously is indicated by a cable in the "Labor Daily," which states that Chiang Kai Shek is bombarding the Red Army from the air and "winning success in Kweichow and Szechwan." The "Labor Daily," according to itself, receives direct information from the Chinese White Guards and exposes its own rotten counter-revolutionary controllers by printing them without comment. However, history shows that when Chiang claims victory he has just received a tremendous defeat.

#### WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The Chinese Revolution would have succeeded in overthrowing the White Guard Government long since had it not been for the support of imperialists who, as we have already seen in the case of the Canton Commune, continuously intervene, subjecting towns and cities occupied by the Reds to naval bombardment and providing finance and modern war equipment to Chiang Kai Shek. The imperialists plan to divide up China amongst themselves; they are ready to directly intervene in the event of Chiang's armies being decisively defeated in the present struggle. Japan has already seized Manchuria and dominates North China. Chiang, who previously was the ally of American imperialism, tends more and more towards Japan, which naturally is not favorably regarded by U.S. imperialism, which also wants its share in the division of China, and this sharpens the American-Japanese antagonism and impels them to prepare for war at a more speedy tempo, as shown in the rapid growth of their already swollen navies. British and French imperialism likewise desire to tear juicy steaks from the living body of China in the shape of territories which they covet. Hence the Chinese situation is pregnant with imperialist war on the Chinese people and with a new imperialist world war for the division of the spoils. Then there is the preparation by Japan for the offensive against the

Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic. In the event of a Soviet victory in all China, we at once visualise the world-shaking problems involved; of imperialist intervention against Soviet China and the U.S.S.R., the sharpening of the imperialist antagonisms, and the shock to the world imperialist system; its effect on India and the other subjugated Asiatic countries. China has a special interest for the Australian working class, as it is one of our nearest neighbors, and what happens in that country, in the conditions of modern communications which are destroying time and distance, will powerfully affect future Australian history. The Chinese workers are appealing for our support against the imperialist attacks upon them, and it is our revolutionary duty to render all aid and assistance, resolutely combating any attempt to send military and naval forces from this country to crush the Chinese people who are so heroically struggling towards freedom and Socialism. The Chinese nation is destined to play an ever-growing role in world affairs, determined by their capacity and terrific potential strength. Karl Marx summed the matter up when he wrote that the European capitalist, penetrating China, destroying the ancient social order, stirring up the people, would set in motion such colossal forces that would not only revolutionise China, but would deal a mighty blow at European capitalism itself. We can gauge from this the importance of the possible role which the Chinese Revolution can play in bringing about the World Revolution and victory for the international proletariat.

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## The Results of the Victorian Elections

By J. D. BLAKE

The elections of March 2 in Victoria brought about some important changes in the relations between the various parties, which are significant in indicating the undermining of the form of Coalition Government—which belongs to the period of the Premiers' Plan.

The Victorian election campaign, which was of extremely short duration, took place at a time when the temporary economic improvement had taken on definite form in certain spheres of industry, and when the Argyle Government was in the best position to use to the full the temporary economic improvement which had taken place.

The operation of the Premiers' Plan and the carrying out of further measures to increase the burdens of the workers and poor farmers provided the main foundation of the temporary economic improvement which has taken place, and it was primarily the promised continuation of this line which formed the basis of the policy of the U.A.P. in the election campaign.

Vague talk on how the position of the unemployed workers was to be improved by the extension of the Work for Dole scheme and equally vague promises that the conditions of the farmers would be improved, were the main points in the policy of the U.A.P. in the elections.

The real policy of the Argyle Government is actually a further increase in the drive against the living standards of the workers in industry, and for the worsening of the conditions of the unemployed workers by the placing of greater and greater numbers of unemployed workers on to the lower rate of sustenance and a more rigid application of the Permissible Income Regulations.

The policy advanced by the Labor Party in the State elections was noteworthy for its extreme barrenness, which in itself is an indication of the bankruptcy of the Labor Party in the present situation. Regarding unemployment, Tunnecliffe stated in his policy speech: "This problem could not be solved by a continuance of the dole. The only solution was to provide full-time employment at award rates of pay to all citizens who were willing to work."

This wild and demagogic promise was the central (in fact, it is almost possible to say the only) point in the Labor Party's



election campaign and is indicative of the blatant electioneering outlook of the Labor Party. But the important point is that the Labor Party made this grand promise for the solution (?) of the unemployment problem, while knowing full well that the Labor Party would not receive a majority in the election, and for this reason there was little danger that it may be called upon to explain its inability to fulfil such an extravagant promise in practice.

The Labor Party entered the election campaign with the definite objective of remaining in the opposition, and did not desire a majority in Parliament. That this is so will be seen from the fact that some time before the opening of the election campaign, Tunnecliffe, the leader of the Victorian Labor Party, is known to have stated that the A.L.P. had no desire to secure a majority in this election, but desired merely to increase its voting strength in Parliament.

This is further borne out by the number of candidates nominated by the Labor Party. Thirty-five Labor Party candidates were nominated and it would have been necessary to secure the election of every candidate nominated and then the election of a U.A.P. or Country Party speaker before the Labor Party could have secured a majority. Thus the Labor Party itself made sure that it was impossible to be returned with a majority in Parliament.

The meeting in the Collingwood Town Hall, where the Labor Party's policy speech was delivered, provided an unprecedented experience for the Victorian Labor Party. In the first place the attendance at the meeting was the smallest known for many years, and secondly the speech of Tunnecliffe was received with an air of hilarity by the workers in the audience. Such interjections as "Sing us the rest of it, Tom," and "What about whistling it?" were indicative of the disgust of the workers with the whole policy of the Labor Party. In fact, there were times when the entire meeting showed signs of developing into a farcical burlesque.

In accordance with expectations, the election resulted in the return of the Government, but with the strength of the U.A.P. reduced considerably. The U.A.P. secured the election of 25 members in place of 29 in the last Parliament. The Country Party secured 20 seats in place of 16 in the last Parliament, while the Labor Party increased from 16 to 17 seats.

The main point in these figures is the considerable increase in the number of seats gained by the Country Party and the fact

that the four seats gained by this party were gained at the expense of the U.A.P., indicating that all is not so harmonious between the two parties of the National Government. The U.A.P. Minister for Education, Pennington, was also defeated by a candidate of the Country Party.

The strengthened position of the Country Party is indicative of the growing differences in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. The Country Party, which represents the big agrarian capitalists and the big exporters, has shown considerable hostility to the imposition of export restrictions, and in this regard particularly to the British quota system and the new restriction on meat exports. The Country Party is also opposed to the new Transport Regulations Bill, which leads to higher freight charges on the railways, and in connection with this latter the Country Party in its policy speech made one of the main points—the proposal that £29,000,000 be written off the railway liability and passed on to the taxpayers, thus placing the burden of over-capitalisation of the railways on to consolidated revenue and providing the possibility for reduced railway freights for the agrarian capitalists.

These points of difference foreshadow the possibility of the outbreak of greater conflicts between the different sections of the bourgeoisie, as a result of the increased strength of the Country Party following upon the elections.

It is interesting at this stage to note the fact that immediately following the elections Tunnecliffe, the Labor Party leader, proposed to the Country Party that if it formed the Government, the Labor Party would give it every possible support supposedly in order to establish an anti-U.A.P. Government. In other words, the Labor Party, which is supposed to be a party of the working class, proposes openly and shamelessly to give its support to one of the open parties of the bourgeoisie. Nothing could be more damning of the Labor Party in the eyes of the workers than the fact that it is prepared to carry its own particular methods of supporting capitalism a stage further by openly allying itself with the party of the agrarian capitalists.

Tunnecliffe may argue on the puerile basis that this would develop united opposition to the Argyle Government. But this same Tunnecliffe and the Labor Party leaders rejected the proposals of the Communist Party for the development of united action of all sections of the workers against the Argyle Government. This is the real and only opposition to the Argyle Government; but then, of course, Tunnecliffe is not interested in the development of any real and genuine opposition to the Argyle

Government—instead of coming to the workers for this he prefers to kow-tow to the party of the big agrarians.

The Country Party has rejected the offer of the services of the Labor Party, and latest indications are that a Government will be formed with an increase in the number of portfolios held by the Country Party. The more equal representation of the two parties in the Ministry means that the strength of the National Government has been seriously undermined and the situation is pregnant with the possibility of conflicts.

But the point of greatest importance for the workers lies in the fact that the changes which have taken place in the relationships between the capitalist parties will lead directly to an intensified drive against the workers and toiling farmers. Precisely in order to check the growth of differences in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, its different sections will unite in an attempt to solve their various problems at the expense of the workers and toilers.

Hence the result of the election will be a sharpened offensive on wages and conditions, or the continuation in a more aggravated and acute form of the policy of the Premiers' Plan. On the extent to which the workers are able to develop united opposition to this policy will depend the rapidity with which the power of the Argyle Government will be undermined.

The changes which took place in the vote recorded for the Communist Party in the elections were of a rather mixed character. In Collingwood, the vote secured by Comrade Thornton is of particular importance. This is the electorate of Tunnecliffe, the Labor Party leader, and the vote of 2,341 recorded for the Communist Party is of great importance. This figure shows an increase of more than 50 per cent. in the Communist vote as compared with the same area in the Federal election five months ago. This achievement is mainly due to the improvement in the Party mass work in the area, although the campaign during the election had a number of weaknesses.

In Footscray, the most important industrial area, Comrade Watt polled 3,674 votes on behalf of the Communist Party. This is the highest vote recorded on behalf of the Party in the State elections, and is mainly due to the considerable improvement in Party mass work in this important industrial area. In addition, of course, the fact that this was a straight-out Communist-Labor contest had a material influence in increasing the vote for Communism in Footscray by more than double in comparison with the vote in the same area in the Federal election in September.

In Carlton, the vote for the Communist candidate, Comrade O'Day, remained almost stationary when compared with the vote in Carlton in the last State election. This vote reveals very clearly the weaknesses in the Party mass work in this particular area. Although there is good support for Communism amongst the Carlton workers, the vote for the Party has not grown after a period of nearly three years.

The main weakness in this area lies in the fact that the Party organisation, in its mass work, has not been sufficiently concrete and positive. The work in the factories has not had the sustained character which is so essential for the consolidation of Communist influence among the industrial workers. The work of our comrades amongst the unemployed has been altogether too negative in character. Too much time has been wasted in negative attacks on the leaders of the C.U.C. and the Trotskyists, with practically no consistent effort to develop the struggles of the unemployed workers for improved conditions.

The failure of our comrades to counteract and expose the campaign of the Trotskyists in support of the Labor Party was also a contributing factor to the stationary vote.

In Wonthaggi, the Communist vote was actually reduced, and this took place at a time when the support for the policy of the Communist Party was on a high level, and the Communist election campaign was the best yet conducted in the area, but this improvement in the work came too late to counteract the effects of the lack of sustained Communist work in Wonthaggi in the period after the five months' strike. This factor is the real weakness which resulted in the fall in the vote at Wonthaggi, because had this condition not existed the vicious campaign of intimidation would not have produced the effect it did. The open intimidation and threats against miners who failed to vote for the Labor candidate, coupled with the complete absence of any semblance of secret ballot, undoubtedly influenced many Communist votes.

It is necessary for the Communists in Victoria to develop a strong campaign against the £50 deposit, which operates most sharply against the Party of the working-class, and also against the open system of marking the roll number of the voter on the ballot-paper, which serves the purpose of intimidating workers who desire to vote for the Communist candidates.

Victorian Communists must seriously tackle the problem of

eradicating the weaknesses revealed in the result of the elections in order to guarantee that the successes which have been achieved will be consolidated and extended with a development of real united front activity amongst the masses of the workers.

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## One Hundred Years of Australian Trade Unionism

By J. N. RAWLING

(Continued from last issue)

In the meantime, the process of centralising the unions had begun. Union obviously meant strength for the individual workers in their relations with the employer, and it was becoming apparent that union was strength also when individual unions faced the united employing class. This process of developing the union of unions, as time went on, took three forms: firstly, the amalgamation of similar unions in the various colonies to form one union for Australia, instead of one for each colony; secondly, the setting up of a central organisation to link all unions in each colony and then for all Australia; and thirdly, the federation of craft unions engaged in the same industry into industrial unions.

The setting up of some form of central organisation both for a colony and also for the whole continent began quite early. For the colony, this central organ took the form of a Trades Council, and, for the continent, Australasian Conferences of Trade Unions. The first Trades Council was founded in Melbourne. That was in 1856. The Sydney Council was set up in 1871. The rest of the colonies followed suit. The first inter-colonial Conference was held in Sydney in 1879 and from then they were held fairly regularly (1884, 1885, 1886, 1888, 1889, 1890). The unions, in these early days, professed to be concerned only with industrial matters, but the logic of events and circumstance drove the unions into politics and finally into party politics. We find such subjects upon the agenda of the Inter-Colonial Trade Union Congress as: "One man one vote," "payment of members," "legalisation of trade unions," and so on. The last mentioned was a burning one. The Masters and Servants Act, previously referred to, still set

out the legal position of trade unions. In 1876, as a result of agitation, South Australia passed a Trade Union Act, modelled on the English Act of five years before. By this latter Act and others of about the same time, trade unions were allowed to hold property, combination was made legal, as also was the right to strike. The series of Acts in Australia initiated by the South Australian Act was to place unions in a legal position similar to that in England.

At the Brisbane Inter-Colonial Conference of 1888, there was evidence that the idea of Socialism was influencing some of the delegates. In the previous year, the Australian Socialist League had been founded. Its members were active in the inauguration of the Parliamentary Labor Party in New South Wales, and were the most advanced elements of that party until they broke with it in 1897. At this same Conference (1888), too, there was a proposal put forward to create one big union after the style of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, already referred to, or of the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 in Philadelphia (U.S.A.), and, at this time (1888), having a membership of over half a million. But this proposal was too advanced for delegates who attended Trade Union Conferences in the 'eighties. The influence of Henry George and of William Lane (soon to become editor of "The Worker" and later to lead his band of exiles to Paraguay—to New Australia) showed itself among the ideas of some of the radical elements at this 1888 Conference.

Unionism was spreading, too, in the country at the same time as these developments were taking place in the cities. The shearing industry is a seasonal one and shearers have to travel about and generally have to find something else to do in the off season. Bad food, heavy fines for "bad" work, inhuman sleeping accommodation, high prices for food bought at the stations—the shearer was hardly better off than a slave, and things got worse in the 'eighties. Economic crises—1873, 1885—led to unemployment in the cities and consequent plentiful supply of labor in the country. The Government also was spending large sums of money in England to attract immigrants in spite of the large amount of unemployment. These immigrants came out in immigrant ships, housed like horses in stalls, to swell the ranks of the unemployed or to take the place of those working—at a lower wage. These immigrants were herded in a barrack-like building—the "Hiring Room" at Port Macquarie—where they were kept

(as an advertisement states, "S.M. Herald," 17/12/'83) "from nine till noon," to be inspected like slaves by their prospective masters. "There was an average demand for farm and other laborers who were single," says the "Herald" (18/12/'83), referring to the hiring of one particular boat-load, "and engagements were made at wages from £30 to £45 a year, with rations and lodgings."

Others were not so "fortunate." For example, we read ("Sydney Morning Herald," 1/12/'83) of a deputation from unemployed immigrants which interviewed the Queensland Immigration Board, sitting at a "special meeting to consider the case of unemployed immigrants." It was announced that the "Government sympathised to the fullest extent with the unemployed immigrants and would do everything in their power to find them reasonable employment." But "the Immigration Agent reminded the men that they **must not be too nice** in their selection of labor. There was **plenty of work to be found in the interior.**" Quite in accord with the "Herald's" sentiments even fifty years ago!

Things were similar in Sydney. On December 3, 1883, we read in the "Herald" Immigration Officer Wise's report on the system of free passes to the country that had been instituted. These, of course, weren't return passes. We get some idea of the amount of unemployment in the country when we read that for these passes there were 3000 applicants "**other than immigrants,**" from January to October, 1883, and when we consider that, according to the 1881 census, the population of Sydney was only 220,984 and of the whole of N.S.W., just over three-quarters of a million. Of the 3000 applicants for the passes, 2695 were granted—151 to go to Hay to destroy rabbits!

Organised labor was conducting a campaign against immigration. For example, an anti-immigration meeting in the Masonic Hall is, we are told, crowded to the doors ("S.M.H.," 5/12/'83). F. B. Dixon, President of the Trades and Labor Council, under whose auspices the meeting was held, announced the purpose of the meeting to be to oppose "the present unjust system of Government assisted immigration" and to show "disapproval of the appropriation of the State funds for the purpose of flooding an overcrowded labor market at a time of wages being reduced." The resolution condemning the immigration scheme was passed unanimously.

While there was widespread unemployment, the hours in many trades were long. For example, butchers' shops were open

in Sydney on Sunday morning and butchers' hours amounted to a total of "17 hours a day for six days"—a 102 hour week! This must interfere, said the "Herald" (4/12/'83), "with the physical, if not the moral, welfare of the men" who are forced to work for the accommodation of the "poor man"—"not so poor," the "Herald" complains, "as to be unable to supply himself with joints of meat."

During these very days, the Intercolonial Convention, of representatives of all the Colonial Governments, was meeting in Sydney, discussing the question of the annexation of New Guinea, its delegates being entertained at a picnic at Clontarf by the Chamber of Commerce; the "Herald" was publishing articles on Imperial Federation; the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria was demanding the "annexation of the islands adjacent to Australasia" ("S.M.H.," 4/12/'83). Australian imperialism was getting into its stride. In 1885, it took part in the Sudan Expedition—its first imperialist venture overseas. The year before, New Guinea was annexed.

Such was the background of the ferment of the '80's and early '90's, of the building of militant industrial unions, of the organization of the shearers, of the great maritime strike of '90, and the Shearers' Strike, of the beginnings of Australian socialism and of the foundation of the Parliamentary Labor Parties.

In 1886, following upon a year of economic crisis, the move that the overstocking of the labor market must inevitably bring was made. A group of pastoralists announced a reduction of the shearing rate from £1 to 17/6 per hundred and a fine of 2/6 for bad work. The consequent discontent and the additional fact that many miners, who were unionists, used to shear in the shearing season led to the formation of a union. This was the Amalgamated Shearers' Union. Its members soon numbered 9000. The A.S.U. organized the laborers into a separate union, but absorbed them in 1894, when the name was changed to the Australian Workers' Union. The Queensland shearers joined it in 1904.

The A.S.U. was successful in gaining results. By means of conferences and strikes the bulk of the squatters were induced to agree to the union's demands: a rate of £1 per hundred. A year after its inauguration the A.S.U. had a membership of 16,000. In 1889, 2400 shearing sheds were working under union conditions in N.S.W., Vic., and S.A.

But the capitalists began to mobilise their forces, as evidence

was piled on evidence of the strength, and the growing strength, of the big unions. As the unions became more powerful, and as they won victory after victory, efforts were made to try and enforce arbitration. The beginnings of compulsory arbitration were made. Then the employers were becoming more closely organised. Employers' Unions sprang up—Victoria, 1886; N.S.W., 1888. In addition, there were a Pastoralists' Union, Steamship Owners' Association, Mine Owners' Association, and so on.

The victories of the unions and the growing efficiency of employers' organisations, together with the fact that the industrial boom was drawing to a close (1889), led the employers to plan and prepare for a fight which was going to put the workers into their place, smash the unions and ensure to the capitalists mastery in their own house. On the other hand, because of those victories, the unions were feeling elated and were prepared for a struggle. In 1889, there was a very successful strike in Broken Hill. As a result of the victory (after only eight days' strike), only unionists were to be employed. And there had been the victory of the London Dock Strike, to the winning of which no small part had been played by Australian workers, who collected over £30,000 to aid the London dockers! The rapidly spreading Socialist ideas also helped make up the leaven that raised the enthusiasm in the mass of the workers, elated by victories, many of whom saw ahead something greater than a mere victory over employers.

The Great Strike of 1890 was begun as a struggle against the pastoralists. The initiative was taken by the Queensland pastoralists who, on the Darling Downs, had determined upon the "open shed." The response was immediate. The Queensland "Australian Labor Federation" (that is, their trades and labor council) called for resistance to this anti-unionist policy of the pastoralists. The wharf-laborers refused to handle black wool and the pastoralists were forced to capitulate.

In N.S.W., of 2,800 sheds, 2,400 were union sheds. The A.S.U. was determined to force the 400 "open sheds" to become union sheds, and warned the pastoralists that non-union wool would receive the same treatment as it had received in Queensland. The pastoralists who owned the "open sheds" refused to give way, and the stage was set for a struggle. They evidently based their refusal upon the firm determination of the Employers' Union, Pastoralists' Union and Ship-Owners' Association to give battle to the unions, and upon the preparations and organisation that

these employers' unions had made for victory. A part of that preparation was to ensure that the struggle should commence before the height of the wool season. After the strike was over, Edmund Edmonds Smith, President of the Employers' Union, said: "We have to thank the executive of the Employers' Union for the way in which the strike eventuated, as well as the secretaries and the other gentlemen who worked so amicably with the executive through a difficult and trying time. The late Mr. Alfred Lamb, of Sydney, was the man who really brought the thing forward. He knew that it was the intention of the labor bodies to postpone the difficulty until the height of the wool season, and he thought it was better to bring it on sooner. I am very sorry that the country should have lost over a million of money in proving to a section of the community that it cannot coerce the whole. This is, now, however, laid down and it will be difficult to disturb the position which matters have assumed."

On the other hand, there were that hesitancy and pacifism in the labor leaders that were destined to play such havoc with the industrial movement during the next forty years. Spence, of the A.S.U., did not anticipate a struggle and seemed to imagine that his bluffing warnings to the pastoralists, coupled with the outcome of the struggle in Queensland, would scare them to such an extent that they would lay down their arms without striking a blow. "Labor had no desire for trouble, and as it had no executive or other head managing affairs in the way the employers had, each union was simply dealing with its own affairs in its own way," says Spence in his "Australia's Awakening."

The Parkes Government in N.S.W., was also lined up with the forces of the employers to crush the strike. As one incident, pastoralists and employers staged a provocative demonstration down George Street, Sydney, to the Quay. Nine trolleys were loaded with black wool and driven by employers in a procession to the Quay, protected by "60 mounted police, 200 foot police and 200 special constables." (Spence.) Several attempts were made by the strikers to block the procession. The Riot Act was read at the Quay and the police—foot and mounted—charged the mass of strikers, sympathisers and lookers-on, batoning right and left.

Action commenced on August 8. On that day, the Sydney wharf laborers sent an ultimatum that they would not handle black wool. Their employers answered in a spirit of defiance, threatening employment of non-union labor. Support for the A.S.U. and the Wharf Laborers was promised from the Seamen and the Miners, and a Labor Defence Committee was set up. It

was the Marine Officers who set the ball rolling. In the previous year, the officers of coastal boats had formed a Marine Officers' Union and had affiliated with the Melbourne Trades and Labor Council. The Ship Owners now demanded that that affiliation be cancelled. The Marine Officers refused and left their ships on August 16. Two days later the manning of a boat with scab labor was the cause of the withdrawal from the ships of seamen, cooks and stewards and, from the wharves, of the wharf laborers. But a scab ship got away and reached Newcastle, where it was to be loaded with coal. The miners of the pit which was to supply the coal struck. Then the Mine Owners played their part, and all of the mines were closed down. By September, all of the Australian Colonies as well as New Zealand were involved.

The employers prepared to use all of their resources to crush the strike, and nothing less than the smashing of unionism was their goal. A shipowners' conference, on August 3, announced their intention to rid themselves "clear of these tyrannical labor organisations." Employers, in September, expressed their determination to maintain "freedom of contract," that is, the smashing of unionism by the employment of non-unionists. The stevedores, by notice that in future all workers for them would have to work under conditions fixed by the stevedores, lined themselves up with the rest of the employers.

On the other hand, there were being manifested in labor ranks the same developments that defeated the 1917 strike. Among the rank and file there were solidarity, militancy and determination. Among the leaders there were hesitancy and a desire (which was not hidden from the employers) to call off the strike as soon as possible. Unions had to be restrained from coming out in support, while those working subscribed freely to support the 30,000 men on strike. But, in the second week in November, the Melbourne Trades Hall intimated a go-between that it was willing to call off the strike, to allow the employment of non-unionists and to submit the dispute to arbitration! In Sydney, the Defence Committee showed its weakness by seeking for a conference, but, when the employers refused to agree, the Intercolonial Conference, that had assembled in Sydney, decided to call out the shearers. Even here, Spence tried to prevent this move and succeeded in delaying action for ten days. Immediately the shearers came out, the employers agreed to a conference! And just as immediately the shearers (16,500 of whom had answered the call to strike) were ordered back to work! And then the employers withdrew their expressed agreement to meet in a

conference! The Union leaders were out-generalled—possibly because of their simple trust in an employer's word, a trust, however, that amounted in practice to a betrayal of the strike, which rapidly collapsed. The Intercolonial Conference dispersed, leaving the baby to the executive. The big battle had been won and the employers went on with their mopping up.

This mopping up resulted in free labor on the ships and the wharves and in "freedom of contract" in the shearing sheds. The struggle between pastoralists and shearers went on spasmodically. In Queensland, the determination of the pastoralists and of their Government to enforce their own conditions was expressed in the form of Gatling guns and nine-pounders. In Broken Hill (1892), arrest of strike leaders and the introduction of scabs during a strike broke the power of the union, and the miners lost conditions they had won during years of struggle. The era of the militancy and enthusiasm which had filled the 'eighties was at an end. The prolonged trade depression of 1893 (in which year, from April 5 to May 17, twelve banks suspended payment) helped in the breaking of the unions' power. The years following the depression were years of defeat and disillusionment for the workers. And that defeat and that disillusionment were capitalised in the Political Labor Party which arose as a direct result of the 1890 strike, with the approval and blessing of the pastoralists and employers of Australia. Unionism had to wait for the coming of a new century in order to see its revival. In the meantime, parliamentarism and arbitration were to weaken unionism, until disillusionment with these was to result in a turn to militant unionism, in the years immediately preceding the Great War.

(To be continued)

## Preferences and the United Front

By J. B. MILES

The following letter is one of the few written to the editor of "The Workers' Weekly" or to the C.C. office, indicating opposition to the decision of the Communist Party on preferences in the several State elections which take place this year:—

Comrade Editor,—With reference to the preference votes in the forthcoming elections. It appears to a great many of the rank and file Party members nothing else than a glaring contradiction; we have been condemning the political leadership for years, calling them traitors, and now we are asked to vote them into office to continue their traitorous work. Does the C.C. realise the false position it puts us in when on the job we are running down Labor politicians. We have something like this: "Well, if they are as bad as you say, why does the Communist Party tell you to give your preferences to them?" A great many of us would prefer a Tory Government, as it tends to consolidate the workers and bring about that united front that we are after. It is very easy for J. B. M. in the issue of 1/3/'35 to put up an argument in favor of voting Labor, but the principle remains—no compromise with traitors, not even to find favor with their supporters. As political Labor and Fascism are synonymous, why flirt with them? On with the class war. —Fraternally yours,

J. H.

The Central Committee is aware that members have expressed doubt, hesitation and, in a very few cases, opposition to allotting No. 2 in the ballot to the Labor Party candidate. But it is not correct to assert that "It appears to a great many of the rank and file Party members nothing else than a glaring contradiction." This may appear to be the case in Brisbane, and if this is so the question arises, why is the District Committee of our Party not aware of it? And why have we heard from only two comrades in Brisbane? Widespread opposition to the line of our Party on even a minor question is a very serious condition and calls for the immediate and careful attention of the C.C. and the whole Party. When any member states that "a great many of the rank and file Party members" are in opposition, it is necessary to examine the situation. In relation to the issue of parliamentary election preferences our comrade may be able to produce some justification

from his own circle for his assertion that a great many are in opposition. But it is not correct for him to assume that because one or two in his job or street unit are unclear there are a great many holding similar views.

The examination of the letter will make plain to all the need to be sure about the facts before making assertions and drawing conclusions. Not more than a score letters have been received by the C.C. or organs of the C.C. indicating doubt or opposition. Every leading committee of our Party has expressed approval of the decision, and during the elections in Victoria and in the preliminary meetings in New South Wales the mass of Party members and sympathisers wholeheartedly endorse the decision.

There are other evidences in the letter of the need to analyse the subject before making statements. No objection can be raised to a member expressing opposition to a change in tactics, that is his right so long as he does not persist against the decision to the point of disruption. But no one has the right to mis-state the position of the C.C. or to read into it what is not there. Most of the letters received contain statements in which the writers confuse their interpretation of the Party decision, their doubts about its results, with the content of the decision. This leads to assertions about the C.C. decision which are wholly incorrect or have only the most superficial justification.

In the above letter the following definite statements are made: (1) "Now we are asked to vote them into office to continue their traitorous work." (2) The article in the "Weekly" of 1/3/'35 is alleged "to put up an argument in favor of voting Labor." (3) "As political Labor and Fascism are synonymous, why flirt with them?"

These statements are typical of ideas in the letters from comrades whether they have expressed doubt and hesitation or definite opposition. Notwithstanding that we can see why the first statement is made, it is necessary to emphasise that the C.C. has not made such a call and no one writing for the C.C. has interpreted the line of the C.C. to mean a call "to vote them into office" much less to do so in order that they may "continue their traitorous work."

It would assist the editors of our press and members of the C.C. if comrades would indicate which statement they refer to when in objection they imply or assert that the Party line is this way or another way. Even when a critic knows he is expressing his conclusion as to the implication or effect of a lead, it would help if he would quote the particular passage which in his opinion

points in a certain way.

No one can produce the slightest evidence that the C.C. calls upon Party members and supporters "to vote them into office," etc. However, it is true that in some instances the complete transfer of Communist first preferences to a Labor candidate may put him into office, and it is possible that such successes for Labor Party candidates will make the difference between A.L.P. or U.A.P. majority in Parliament. But is it to produce this result that the Communist Party has made a change in its line about preferences? No one who will study our views can answer "Yes!" to this question. Past elections show that the majority of Communist second preferences go to the Labor Party, hence the same result would, in the main, be produced even though no lead was given on this question.

A brief review of our experiences on the issue will be useful. Do the comrades who disagree realise that after the experience of our Party in the 1929 elections it was essential to establish beyond question the complete independence of the Communist Party from the Labor Party? Do they recall or have they since studied the role of the Labor parties in the few years before the crisis when class collaboration had become most glaring, when the relative stabilisation of capitalism had revived all the illusions about gradually improving capitalism out of existence or getting rid of its evils without getting rid of capitalism? Do they recall how closely allied the Labor parties and the reformist trade union leaders had become to the capitalist State, how they opposed sometimes as the Government, always as agents of capital in the Labor movement, the actions of the workers against the employers and the Government?

In these conditions, and especially when right wing leadership had made of the Communist Party a small and not very effective group—almost an appendage of the Labor Party—it was imperative to assert and demonstrate the independence of our Party. In direct contrast to the 1929 Federal elections our Party nominated candidates in opposition to all other parties at subsequent elections. Where we had no candidates we definitely advocated an informal vote. Along with better practice in other spheres of activity and with the growth of Communist consciousness due to a closer study of Marx-Leninism, this line and practice led to a rapid development of our Party.

But at the same time we tried to prove our impartial attitude on the question of which other party might be the Government party by trying to arrange to divide our preferences among the

candidates of other parties. Experience showed us that this attitude on the preference question was, for us, a mistake; the worker member of the A.L.P. saw a card which showed Communist (1), Nationalist (2), and even if he saw the other cards with Labor (2) he felt antagonism toward the C.P. The A.L.P. from the platform and in its press did all possible to extend this misunderstanding into prejudice and suspicion. We learned the lesson and drew the conclusion that we would remove this barrier by making it clear to the workers who feared a Nationalist Government and thought it better to have the A.L.P. in office, that while we disagreed with their views on the lesser evil, we did not object to votes which we could not get going to the A.L.P., and that after voting Communist (1) we did not oppose Labor (2).

There was no hesitation when we gave the lead, "Preferences according to your own choice." It was easier to see that the C.P. was not making a choice between the other parties for the seats of government, and it allowed those who wished to vote against the Labor Party in every way with an easy conscience.

Nevertheless there is no fundamental difference between the previous lead on preferences and the present one. If the object of the previous tactical change was not clearly seen, i.e., to remove a barrier between Communists and the reformist workers, it would be just as logical to say then as now, "You are putting up an argument in favor of voting Labor."

But "preferences as you choose" still retained the germs of misunderstanding between Communists and reformists, because some Communist voters, who were guided more by their feelings than by political judgment, still gave second preferences to Tory candidates, as all election figures to date have shown. Not only is this the case. There are to-day strong reasons for still more strenuous and bold efforts to get nearer to the reformist workers. In Australia there is, in common with the whole capitalist world, a definite tendency toward working-class unity, in the trade union sphere, in the strike actions, in the struggles of the unemployed, in the movement against imperialist war and the menace of fascism, and in defence of the Soviet Union. Even though the level of this move toward unity in action is not so strong as in some countries, it is developing in Australia despite the efforts of the A.L.P. leadership and their allies in many of the union offices to prevent this urge to unity achieving organised expression and action. The Communist Party, therefore, seeing



this strong tendency toward a united front, and being aware that our past tactic on preferences still had a degree of sectarian effect, draws the conclusion that it is essential to foster this class unity, and calls for the removal of every barrier which does not arise from questions of principle.

Except the writer of the above letter, who gives expression to a form of "lesser evil," all critics of the Party lead see fairly clearly that we do not even now say in any sense that it is better for the workers and the Communist Party to have a government of any one of the other parties, but they are afraid that the modification of our own tactic tends in that direction. This is because they do not see that the change is not proposed because we have changed our estimate of the Labor Party, it is not proposed because we want a Labor Government. They do not see that if we are sincere in our assertion that neither of the orthodox parties in the seats of government will assist the workers or the poor farmers in their struggles against capitalism; if we really mean that it is not easier to develop organisation and struggle if this or that orthodox party is in office, then we should be able to say to all the exploited, including the reformist workers, "We state our case against capitalism, against all other parties, including yours, and in support of our immediate demands and organisational proposals, for a Soviet Australia and socialism, we ask you to vote Communist (1)." If we Communists cannot secure the majority, then we not only have no special objection to a Labor Government in contrast to a Nationalist Government; we go further and say to the reformist workers, "You have a choice, you think the A.L.P. is, if not a good government, the least harmful government; therefore since it involves no question of principle, since the position of the Communist Party is clear, we advocate Labor (2)."

What is the effect we seek? Not office for A.L.P. nominees—that is incidental—but the removal of barriers between the revolutionary Party and the reformist workers who have yet to be won for a policy of struggle, who must further be won to accept the leadership of the Communist Party before capitalism can be abolished. We aim to remove prejudice and suspicion so that we can get together with more and more A.L.P. workers in discussion, in trade union work, in the factory, in the strike, in the unemployed organisations and actions, in every organisation and action in the interests of the exploited. That is our immediate aim in putting forward the preference tactic; its result will be closer contact and better understanding, improved organ-

isation for struggle, and the winning of greater numbers to the banner of the Communist Party. If one effect is success in the election for an A.L.P. candidate, that is a side issue which arises not from flirting with social-fascism but from positive efforts—which will bring good results—in the interests of our class. Comrades are agreed that for us there is no choice between the other parties, yet they show, because one effect of our tactic may be the return of a Labor candidate, possibly even a Labor Government, that they are choosing. The character of all the objections—not the questions of those who are in doubt—brought forward is based on the form of "lesser evil" which is definitely stated in the above letter; they "prefer a Tory Government as it tends to consolidate the workers and brings about the united front that we are after." The way to the united front, then, is to raise further barriers between the Communists and the reformist workers. How absurd!

The way to consolidate the workers is to choose the open capitalist party. Behind this is the idea that a so-called Tory party hits harder than a reformist party and the logical conclusion is that the worst conditions for the working class—fascism—will consolidate them most firmly. Maybe the comrade does not mean this, but that is where his form of "lesser evil" leads to.

The comrade interprets our lead to be flirting with social-fascism. We deny this and show who we seek contact with (the rank and file) and why (the united front). He, however, definitely advocates flirtation with a tactic which means to choose a Tory Government, and this in the name of the united front. Under the slogan of "No compromise" we are asked to compromise on our line of no choice between the other parties as the Government. Under the slogan of "No compromise" our comrade prefers a Tory Government to a tactic which compromises no principle and which will bring the reformist workers nearer to us.

The first and second mistaken statements about our tactic have been dealt with and to some extent the third. But there remains the formulation that "political Labor (social-fascism) and fascism are synonymous." The Communist Party has never said so. The fact that we do not prefer either of the other parties as the government is not to say that they are exactly the same. Their social basis differs very much, their policy often comes very close to being exactly alike, but even here there are differences: their practice becomes more and more similar, but the Labor Party tries to remain a party of capitalist democracy, a liberal

Labor Party. It is so if conditions permit, though conditions tend more and more to drive them over to fascism. The so-called Tory party would like to abandon all democracy, all liberalism, but it is compelled to manoeuvre under mass pressure, to try and hold on by the old methods while it prepares the way for fascism.

The undoubted differences must be borne in mind if we are to avoid errors. So also must we bear in mind that bourgeois democracy (Labor or Nationalists in office) is not fascism. Bourgeois democracy is disappearing, it becomes more and more fascised; but there remain democratic rights in Australia and some other countries.

We must see the process of fascisation and fight against it not by defending capitalist democracy or choosing a Tory Government, but by defending these democratic rights and arousing the masses in opposition to the restrictions already imposed by both Nationalist and Labor administrators. If we characterise Labor Party Governments in all conditions and all "Tory" Parliamentary Governments as fascism, we are misleading the workers and other people who will suffer under fascism. Conditions in the fascist countries do differ from those in Australia, for example. The differences are not fundamental; fascisation proceeds in Australia, but we must see the differences; we must realise the possibilities to prevent a fascist regime in Australia. A successful struggle against fascism cannot be waged unless we secure the attention of the A.L.P. rank and file and win them to the united front of struggle, for better conditions, in defence of democratic rights, against the war danger in defence of the land of socialism.

(6)

## Anzac Day, 1915-1935

By "NUGAFONOS"

Twenty years it is since the flower of that generation of Australia's workers and farmers were cast as pawns upon the barren hills of the Dardanelles—a name of happy augury for the jingo song-writers, because it rhymed with shells! "Heroes of the Dardanelles, They faced the shot and shells." One thing the songster forgot, however, was that the shot and shells had been made in English factories. But "factories" is a difficult word for which to find a rhyme—and, anyhow, the rhyme and reason of the dark and devious ways of manufacturers of shot and shell are best left unsung, else we shall lack heroes to face the shot and shell when next they are needed.

Why were the workers' sons of Australia and New Zealand there on those far-away beaches on that first Anzac morning? To answer that question is to describe the whole development of European imperialism and of the antagonisms between the various Powers that led to the war. War between Britain and Germany must inevitably have sought for battle-fields in what Europe calls the Near East. It was there that British and German imperial interests found themselves most strongly opposed. The time had long since arrived when all of the unclaimed parts had been divided up between the imperialist Powers—the process of division having given rise to wars and rumors of wars. Now the process had begun of seizing even independent and civilised States that did not have the forces to protect themselves. So Egypt had fallen into Britain's maw, as Morocco had fallen into that of France, and the first decade of the twentieth century had seen Turkey become the battle-ground for the economic war and the struggle for concessions between British and German finance-capitalists.

German iron and steel and German capital were finding scope for their expansion in the building of the Bagdad Railway, which, in turn, was to bring Near and Middle East trade overland to Berlin instead of through British Suez to London. As that railway approached the Persian Gulf, British imperialism was concerned to make the Near East safe for British imperialism and Turkey's southern dependencies were considered to be safer

if in the keeping of Britain—past mistress in the art of keeping dependencies in safe keeping. So war must be prepared—and Turkey must be forced into that war against Britain, so that Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia should enjoy the blessings of British rule. And, when war broke out, the Turkish warship, building in England, and ready for delivery, was confiscated to ensure that Turkey would declare war.

But Turkey was destined to be the victim of other Powers, too. Imperialist Russia had for centuries been endeavoring to gain possession of the Straits—the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Again, it had been Greek cotton and wheat merchants and Greek financiers (Zaharoff) who had formed an important connecting link between Russian Odessa, French Marseilles, and English Liverpool, and had helped to build the Triple Entente. These builders of the Entente—Basil Zaharoff (of oil, of steel, of armaments, of cotton, of corn), Sir Ernest Cassel (of the National Bank of Egypt and friend of Edward VII), Baron d'Erlanger, the Bank of Paris, and so on—wanted the Turk cleared “bag and baggage” out of Europe, just as did, last century, W. E. Gladstone, whose father was a Liverpool cotton and grain merchant and associate of the cosmopolitan grain kings of the Mediterranean.

When the war had been going for several months, Italy was also found to desire defeat of Turkey—for the very laudable reason that she was promised a slice of Turkish territory as her price—in part—for coming into the war. It was on April 25, 1915, that the Anzacs landed on the Peninsula. On the following day, April 26, there was signed in London a Treaty that remained secret until it was published by the Communist Government of Russia after the revolution. By that Treaty, Italy was promised some Turkish territory. The Anzacs had landed the previous morning to make the keeping of that promise possible. At the beginning of March, 1915, France and Britain had promised Russia the Straits. So there was a plentiful supply of reasons why the Anzacs found themselves on the Anzac beaches that grey dawn 20 years ago.

Lenin once asked Gorky: “Why should people, who are well fed, force hungry ones to fight against each other? Could you name a more revolting crime?” And one of the main-springs of his life-long fight against the imperialists was his deadly hatred of them for the misery, poverty, suffering, and death to which they condemned millions.

The French Communist paper, “L’Humanite,” once said the

the fact that Sasonov, one of the Russian architects of the Great War, died in bed instead of at the end of a rope was another proof of the non-existence of God. But the basis for our hatred and indignation is two-fold. For, besides sending millions to their deaths in the interests of profits, they used them as mere pawns in a game, whose lives did not matter at all, gambling with those lives, placing blue-blooded imbeciles in charge of them, with power to use them as fuel to their vanity or as victims of their folly or pig-headed obstinacy. So it was a war of blunders and of crimes that were glossed over as blunders—a war in which the commander of the Canadian Army Corps could order an offensive on the morning of November 11, 1918, on which day, at 11 o'clock, the war was to end—condemning thousands to death, needlessly, simply because he wanted his corps to be back, as 11 o'clock chimed, at Mons, from which the British Army had retreated in 1914!

Gallipoli was one of those “blunders.” The Navy was sent there first to tell the Turks that an attack was impending. When on the Peninsula, the soldiers were neglected. Sufficient reinforcements were not sent. Observers on both sides have told us since that, with adequate forces, the Straits could easily have been taken. But neglect and criminal inefficiency brought failure, and with failure came more deaths and suffering than victory would have caused. Sir Ian Hamilton gives instances of criminal laziness on the part of Corps Commanders which cost many lives. Most of us are familiar with the charges that have been made by those who have written since the war. Then came the last futile offensives in August, 1915, and then—the visit of Lord Kitchener and, upon his advice, withdrawal, the whole operation being a waste of men's lives for nothing—nothing beyond the profits accruing to British armament share-holders for shot and shell fired at and fired by the Turks.

But it has always appeared to the present writer that there was something more behind the withdrawal than mere military reasons. It was admitted, as we all can see, that adequate reinforcements would have meant victory. Now the story that there were no reinforcements available won't hold water. Troops were hastening from Australia and, after the withdrawal, there were immediately built up five Australian divisions. In addition, big forces were being concentrated in Egypt to be used in the following year against the Turks in Palestine and Mesopotamia.

The reasons for the withdrawal must be sought in the rivalries and antagonisms between the Entente Powers, which

did not cease even when war was declared. There can be no real unity between allied imperialist Powers. During the war France and Britain refused to send aid to Italy for fear that she would be victorious over Austria and then make a separate peace, just as, similarly, Germany did not send reinforcements to Austria because Austria might make a separate peace. And Britain did not use in France all the forces that were available—a large army was kept in England and another was mopping up Palestine and Mesopotamia. An alliance of imperialist Powers may be compared to a working arrangement between Chicago gangsters, but, as there is some sort of honor among these latter, a better comparison would be to a pack of wolves: let one make a slip and the rest will devour it. So, for the British lion, the two birds—Palestine and Mesopotamia—which could easily be caught, were worth more than the Constantinople bird in the bush, especially as the latter, when caught, would have to be handed over to the Tsarist Russian bear.

This, it seems, we can rest assured upon, that the withdrawal from Anzac was made because Britain wanted to be holding the greater part of Turkey when peace came, and that part of Turkey which she intended to keep.

Anzac Day commemorates one of the foulest crimes that has ever been committed against the working class of this country. And yet, so powerful are the agencies of capitalist propaganda that thousands still surround the day with dreams of glory and accolades of honor. But there is one atom of satisfaction and one ground for hope amid all the celebrations and the jingoes rant. And that is that Anzac Day has so captured the imagination of the masses, the people of Australia so highly estimate the deeds done and the sacrifice made at Anzac, that this very day must be seized upon and covered with all the camouflage of noble sacrifice and worth-while suffering. Far more suffering and slaughter occurred at Ypres, but that can be forgotten—Anzac Day cannot. And, once the masses of Australia understand fully the horror of that crime at Anzac, the obscurity of the offering to God Capital, then their indignation will be so much the greater for all the bombast and talk of glory that surround its celebration. Let us celebrate Anzac Day not only by pointing out the great betrayal but also by showing how actively preparations are going on for another mass betrayal in another Anzac crime to prevent which we must mobilise such a mighty force of the workers and farmers as will sweep the imperialists and their war-makers into a long-deserved oblivion.

## Tendencies in the Australian T.U. Movement

By R. DIXON

The following is an extract from the report of Comrade R. Dixon to the February session of the Central Committee on the trade union question. The report was given under three headings:—(1) The tendencies in the Australian T.U. movement, (2) What is militant unionism? (3) Tactics and methods of work in the trade unions.

The material provided here is a section from the first question—the tendencies in the Australian T.U. movement. The full material will be issued shortly in pamphlet form under the title "Militant Trade Unionism."—Editor.

\* \* \* \*

Less than 12 months have passed since the 4th Plenum of the C.P. of A., yet this period has witnessed a considerable growth of the revolutionary ferment amongst the masses—a further sharpening of the class struggle.

The class shiftings noted at the 4th Plenum have matured considerably, throwing into bolder relief the tendencies of development in the Australian working-class movement. It is necessary to examine these tendencies, for they have great bearing on our strategy and tactics.

In the first place, the present situation is marked by the development of the strike wave to dimensions which have not been seen since 1928-29-30—but which is proceeding at a higher level of class-consciousness and organisation.

Secondly, on the basis of the strike movement and the mass discontent, there is taking place a revival of working-class interest in trade unionism, but which has a number of peculiarities, some of which are dangerous.

If the strike movement is examined, one is impressed most of all by the greatly increased role of the militant trade unionists in the struggles. It will be remembered that prior to 1930 the reformists controlled the strikes which broke out, almost completely. At the end of 1929 the slogan of independent leadership, to be realised through democratically elected strike committees,

was raised by the revolutionary movement. A change, slow at first, but with gathering tempo, commenced. The centre of gravity of strike leadership shifted, until to-day we can say that a majority of the strikes are led independently of the reformists. More, that practically no strike has taken place recently where the workers have not elected strike committees, although these have not always led the struggles to the end.

What does this mean? Precisely that in the sphere of strike leadership the reformist star is rapidly declining. When it shall completely disappear, rests mainly with the Communists and how they organise their work. This is briefly the position in relation to the strike movement.

In the trade unions the position is not nearly so far advanced. Here there is a lag. The reformists have the greatest measure of control and this is the weakness—the **serious weakness of the whole situation.**

Already much has been said on the importance of the trade unions. The 4th Plenum and the July session of the C.C. devoted particular attention to this question, but the decisions arrived at are in very many instances either not clearly understood or else are but passively accepted.

It is necessary to emphasise again that the trade unions are the key to the whole situation. The struggle to win the trade unions for a militant line is not just a passing task—one which can be placed on a par with many others. It is the most vital and pressing task to-day. It is of historical importance, for on the outcome of this struggle depends largely the future development of the Australian labor movement, its victories and defeats. Without the trade unions there can be no successful struggle against fascism and war, the resistance to the capitalist offensive will be seriously hampered, while there can be no question of a successful struggle for Soviet power.

At the present moment the Party is faced with the task of hastening the unfoldment of the strike movement, with becoming the leading and driving force in this movement. The solution of this task cannot be separated from the struggle to win the trade unions for a militant policy, for they constitute powerful weapons of organisation and unity in the struggle against the employers.

In order to emphasise the role of the trade unions, it is necessary to examine them in relation to the recent strike struggles. The strikes can be placed in three categories:—

(1) Strikes completely under militant leadership from

the beginning to the end (miners, sugar workers, rubber workers, and unemployed).

(2) Strikes where the militants shared the leadership with the reformists (Lysaght's Newcastle, and Melbourne tramwaymen).

(3) Strikes almost completely under the leadership of the reformists (textile).

[Materials on the Western Australian mining and Queensland meat strikes are not yet to hand; hence it is impossible to deal with them.]

If examined in relation to the above categories, then the first thing which stands out is (a) that where the militants lead the strikes the struggles were carried through to the end and in almost every instance victory was obtained and the workers won most of their demands; (b) that where the leadership was shared, the reformists were successful finally in breaking the strikes and forcing the workers back without their main demands being realised, these being submitted to arbitration; (c) that where the reformists almost completely controlled the strikes, the workers were defeated and partly demoralised. Hence, the first conclusion to be drawn is that if the workers are to successfully struggle against the capitalist offensive and for an improvement in their conditions, then militant leadership is necessary.

Now to the second point. If the above categories are again examined it will be seen that where the militants led the strikes from beginning to end, with the exception of the sugar workers they also led the organisations covering the workers concerned (Miners' Federation, State Council of Unemployed, and in the case of the rubber workers, although the union apparatus was held by the reformists, the shop committee, which was the organ that called the strike and organised the election of a broad strike committee, was led by the militants).

Thus, in the struggles of the miners and the unemployed, particularly, the leadership of the organisations covering the workers was in complete sympathy with the demands of the rank and file, and actively assisted in the organising of the struggle and in the election of strike committees from below. They fought determinedly to bring the struggles to a successful conclusion. This harmony between the leadership of the union and the rank and file, this assistance in the organising and leading of struggle, is of great importance if the victory of the workers is to be facilitated.

In the case of the struggle of the Lysaght's workers, Melbourne tram men, textile workers, etc., a totally different situation prevailed. The reformists controlled the trade unions of the workers concerned.

Because of the determination of the workers, the Ironworkers' and Tramway officials at first gave the appearance of supporting the struggles, but only in order to effectively sabotage and at a later stage to break the strikes. These leaderships were not in sympathy with the struggles of the workers nor with the democratic election of strike committees. They were supporters of arbitration and insisted that the demands the workers were fighting for be submitted to the courts. There existed no harmony between the union leaderships and the strike committees elected from below and in the end the reformists used the union apparatus to split the forces of the strikers and drive them back to work.

Hence the second conclusion—that where the militants lead the union as well as the strike committee, the victory of the workers is facilitated, whilst where the reformists control the union, they utilise it as a lever to overcome the activities of the strike committees, to split the workers' forces and break the strike.

This latter, of course, does not mean that whilst ever the reformists control the unions it will be impossible for the militants to successfully lead struggles of the workers to victory. On the contrary, this can be done, as the experience of the sugar workers' struggles shows. In these struggles the workers consistently supported the line of the strike committee right to the end in defiance of the A.W.U. bureaucracy, and the struggle ended in victory. Without doubt the future will see an increasing number of struggles being led independent of the reformists to victory. The point to understand, however, is that victory is rendered much more difficult if the reformists control the union. Therefore not only must the militants intensify their activity to develop and lead struggles independent of the reformists, but must connect this activity with the struggle to win the unions for a militant policy and leadership.

The third conclusion to be drawn is that where the militants have won the leadership of the workers' organisations, there is to be observed greatly increased activity on the part of the workers concerned.

The experience of the unemployed, the shop committees, and the miners completely confirms this. To take the example of the

miners: Since Comrade Orr and later Nelson were elected to the leading positions in the Miners' Federation, the miners everywhere have taken up a much more consistent struggle against the encroachments of the mine owners and for better conditions. Over this last few months more struggles have proceeded around these questions than at almost any other period of the Miners' Federation. The miners are now raising demands on issues that were filched away during the regime of the former leadership and are waging struggles for their rectification. Every day brings news of fresh stoppages, the great majority of which result in victory.

In addition to the struggle for an improvement in working conditions, there is also the action of the South Coast miners of N.S.W. in declaring a one-day stoppage when a number of their leaders were arraigned before the court on charges of forsaking "their public duty by organising an illegal strike at Mt. Keira, N.S.W." This action of the miners was definitely calculated to intimidate the court, and was successful in that the cases were quashed. That one-day stoppage was a political action of no mean order.

The reason for all this increased activity on the part of the miners rests precisely in the fact that the new militant leadership has pursued a policy which has led to a strengthening of the Federation. It has organised and led the struggle to improve the position of the miners. As a result, the miners feel more confidence in their leadership, in their industrial strength and organisation. Hence their increased activity and rising level of class-consciousness.

From this analysis it is clear that the trade unions occupy a key position in relation to the struggles of the workers, and must be won for a militant policy and leadership.

The question immediately arises: Can the reformist unions be won over for a militant T.U. policy? Can we win not only the masses in the unions but also the apparatus, the leading positions in T.U. organisations? Earlier, in dealing with this question, the Communist International indicated that, in the main, it was impossible to capture the apparatus of the unions. Their decisions were no doubt based on the situation in Europe, where the process of fascisation of the unions was more developed. In Australia, however, our whole experience shows that there are a number of unions sufficiently democratic to allow for militants being

ected to leading positions providing they develop good mass work from below and on this basis win the confidence of the T.U. members. The Miners' Federation, Seamen, and a series of other unions bear witness to this fact. Of course, there are some unions in which the democratic rights of the members are so limited that it would be impossible to capture the leading positions in the organisations. The A.W.U. is classical in this connection. The officials of this organisation determine who will contest official positions and reserve the right to reject any nomination they think fit. The A.W.U. presents a special problem, and more must be done to correct and improve our mass work in order to win the members from below. In the main, however, we can win the unions for a militant policy and leadership. This will be accomplished only on the basis of real mass work in the unions and factories and in organising and leading the struggles of the workers against the attacks of the employers. This latter is most important. It is in the economic and political struggles above all that the masses will be won for a militant policy and leadership, for it is then that they contrast in their living experience our policy with that of the reformists.

The 4th Plenum placed as the central task of the Party the development of the struggles of the workers for their immediate needs. To-day this question must be put more sharply than ever. Comrade Miles has correctly criticised the Party for showing a certain neglect and underestimation of the questions relating to the wages of the workers, and has pointed to the urgent need for the revolutionary movement to more systematically take up the struggle in the factories and unions particularly on wages issues. That obviously must become the pivot of militant activity without delay, and it must be connected up with overcoming the serious lag in the winning of the reformist unions to a militant T.U. policy.

Whilst there is an obvious lagging of T.U. work behind the leadership of the economic struggles, at the same time it is necessary to note that a qualitative change is taking place in the T.U. field. From all sides there is evidence that the workers are seeking the advice of the militants and are commencing to accept our line. From supporting a reformist policy the masses are turning towards a militant policy. There is to be observed a definite rise of mass interest and activity in questions of organisation and trade unionism. This process is proceeding under the influence of the militants. It is leading to the breaking down of

the apathy and pessimism for which the reformist leaders are entirely responsible. It is necessary to briefly examine this aspect of the question.

The whole policy of class-collaboration, which is the essence of reformist policy, and which developed so extensively from the beginning of this century, has led directly to the stifling of activity on the part of T.U. members. This latter is deliberate. Apathy is actually fostered by the T.U. officials. Mass activity and interest in union affairs are not desired by the reformists. They want only the payment of dues to maintain themselves and to supply funds for arguing the demands of the workers before judges of the Arbitration Courts. An active membership would interfere with this latter—hence the fostering of apathy. A deadly reformist T.U. routine has been established, and this, combined with the craft narrowness and selfishness of the unions and also the corruption and treachery of the reformists, served to dissipate the workers' interest until in the overwhelming majority of cases they display little interest in the unions' affairs beyond paying dues. To-day, many do not even go to this length. The situation has reached the point where the union officials, together with a small coterie of supporters, conducted the affairs of the organisation.

In the post-war period particularly did this condition develop. Into this situation burst the capitalist crisis, accompanied by mass unemployment, the vicious offensive of the employers, and the mass resistance of the workers, all of which served to reveal in the sharpest form the threadbare policy of class-collaboration and the treacherous role of the bureaucratic officials.

Trade unionism was in the doldrums and the reformist policy was leading to the disintegration and destruction of the mighty movement built up by the Australian workers.

When in 1930 the Party came forward with the slogan of independent leadership of strike struggles, it simultaneously sharpened in every way its attacks against the union officials. Without doubt the propaganda and agitation developed against the reformist bureaucrats hastened their exposure and paved the way at a later stage for strikes to be conducted independently of them. At the same time, however, serious sectarian mistakes were made. Too often a negative abuse of the officials was engaged in and constructive proposals for strengthening the unions were not sufficiently brought forward. The campaign was to a large extent of an anti-official character.

The apathy of the members of the unions, the treachery of the officials, and our struggle against them served to confuse many militant unionists. They commenced to lose confidence in the unions. Believing that it was impossible to capture the unions, many fell out or refused to pay dues. There was a marked tendency to seize upon the rank-and-file movements as alternative forms of organisation to the trade unions instead of as supplementary forms.

Thus, whilst the attacks of the militants against the reformists in the earlier stages of the crisis served to considerably expose them, at the same time this was not accompanied by a strengthening of the unions, which continued to decline.

With the struggle against sectarianism in the Party, a change commenced. Whilst the offensive against the reformists was not slackened, it was accompanied with a more positive and constructive line for strengthening the unions.

As a result, an improvement is already to be observed. The decline of the unions has been considerably arrested, whilst at a number of points a definite strengthening has taken place. This improvement has, however, some interesting features. These we will come to later.

The more consistent pursuit of this line to strengthen the unions is essential. In Australia the great majority of the industrial workers are organised in them. They represent the main line of support, the greatest weapons of the working class for the struggle against capital. It is true that the reformists have introduced the policy of class-collaboration, have caused apathy and pessimism, have dissipated and weakened the unions—but, in spite of all this, the majority of the workers are still connected with the unions, which remain the main source of their strength against capital. Whoever attacks the unions does the work of the enemy. For this reason the reformists must be exposed, isolated, and removed from the controlling positions in the unions. The unions must be won for a militant policy.

The realisation of this demands the final liquidation of sectarianism on the part of the militants. It demands the bringing forward of a positive and constructive line to strengthen the unions. This is the essence of the question. To-day we must state that the struggle to expose and isolate the reformist officials from trade unions is a struggle to strengthen the unions. It is a question of the militants working out a correct constructive line on every problem confronting the workers in the factories and

unions, bringing this line forward, popularising and winning mass support for its application, and at the same time contrasting it with the reformist policy. This is the secret of the success in the mining industry. In the Miners' Federation the reformists were exposed and isolated precisely because the militants demonstrated in the practical experience of the miners the whole rotten position of the former officials by bringing forward a positive line to strengthen the union and improve the lot of the miners. What was accomplished in the Miners' Federation can be accomplished elsewhere, providing similar methods are resorted to. This does not mean that we in any way reduce the fire against the reformists. It means rather that we strengthen this fire by employing better and more effective weapons.

The struggle to strengthen the unions demands the broadest activation of the masses. Whilst the policy of reformism is one of class-collaboration which leads to apathy, that of militant unionism is one of class struggle, and this demands mass activity and interest in union affairs. The importance of this is revealed most sharply in the strikes of the Wonthaggi miners and Goodyear rubber workers. In the Wonthaggi struggle over 400 miners participated in some form of activity, and as the struggle progressed there was observable a continued strengthening of the position and growing confidence and enthusiasm amongst the strikers. Their very activity demonstrated clearly to them the great power they have in organisation and at the same time their active participation in the solution of the problems of the struggle and its leadership meant that at no time was the leadership of the struggle separated from the masses. The Goodyear strike showed signs of development along somewhat similar lines. As a result of both struggles the confidence of the masses in militant policy and leadership increased enormously.

These facts all go to show that the reformist influence which was rendering the unions impotent is now on the wane and that there is taking place a revival of interest in trade unionism and organisational questions as a result of the extension of militant activity. This movement is proceeding, however, at an intolerably slow pace, and this is dangerous. To-day it is necessary to put the question that the Party must throw all its weight into the struggle to strengthen the unions, winning them for a militant trade union line. This demands—

(1) A much more systematic taking up of the daily issues affecting the workers, especially wage questions and



the organising and leading of the struggles for their rectification.

(2) The development on a much wider scale of the shop committee movement. (The serious lag in Victoria and Queensland must be quickly overcome.)

(3) The going over from propaganda and agitation for industrial unionism to a policy of action, bringing forward definite proposals for the amalgamation of unions in a particular industry.

(4) To strengthen the struggle against class-collaboration (arbitration and conciliation) and to expose and isolate the reformist bureaucracy from the unions.

## Forward to a Mass Bolshevik Party

By L. DONALD

Examination of the statistics resulting from a complete check-up throughout the Party at the end of December, 1934, provides material for serious consideration by all Party organs and members. The figures are notable from many aspects. They show that we have now reached the stage where we can record a real membership—one that is really active—and get away from the old position where we had lots of figures on paper but we did not know what our active membership was, what it was composed of, where organised, etc. This fact in itself denotes a further development in the growth and organisational strengthening of our Party.

Secondly, despite a whole number of weaknesses still existing in this sphere, the figures reveal a steady improvement in the industrial composition of the Party membership, the number organised in factory units, and the number engaged in active work in the trade unions.

At the end of December, 1934, the active membership of the Party was 2824, organised in 328 units. These figures may not

seem very significant in themselves, but when they are examined in the light of approximately three thousand Communists carrying out tireless day-to-day work among the masses in the factories, unions, unemployed, etc., organising and leading them in their daily struggles, then the tremendously powerful force of the Communist Party in the labor movement becomes apparent. Here is something for the A.L.P. workers to seriously consider when their leaders refuse the united front with the Communist Party on the grounds of its "insignificance," and when they try to show that the C.P. of A. is not part of the labor movement.

The strength of the C.P. of A. cannot be estimated solely in numbers of members, but mainly in how and where these members are organised and what is their activity and effectiveness in work amongst the masses.

For a long period our Party based itself mainly on the unemployed, and the membership was largely an unemployed membership. In this period there existed little real contact with or organisation in the industries and trade unions. However, in the past period considerable progress has been made in changing this abnormal state of affairs and the healthy position has been reached where now 41 per cent. of the total membership are in industry and balance is steadily changing in favor of the workers in industry.

According to District, the percentage of industrial workers is now as follows\*:

No. 1 . . . . . 22 per cent.	No. 5 . . . . . 29 per cent.
No. 3 . . . . . 50 per cent.	No. 6 . . . . . 55 per cent.
No. 4 . . . . . 41 per cent.	No. 9 . . . . . 62 per cent.

These figures show a satisfactory growth in the industrial composition of the Party in the main Districts, and particularly in Districts Nos. 3, 6, and 9. However, when we examine the percentage of the total membership who are organised in factory units, one of our basic weaknesses is revealed.

### PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MEMBERS ORGANISED IN FACTORY UNITS

No. 1 . . . . . 23 per cent.	No. 5 . . . . . 23 per cent.
No. 3 . . . . . 22 per cent.	No. 6 . . . . . 26 per cent.
No. 4 . . . . . 17 per cent.	No. 9 . . . . . 29 per cent.

\* In this and following tables, No. 2 District is not included, due to the failure of No. 2 District comrades to forward their statistics.

This weakness is revealed even more sharply when we examine the relative position of the factory units to street units:—

#### NUMBER FACTORY AND STREET UNITS

	Total Units	Factory Units	Street Units
No. 1 . . . . .	153	47	90
No. 3 . . . . .	37	7	26
No. 4 . . . . .	74	17	49
No. 5 . . . . .	16	5	11
No. 6 . . . . .	13	5	8
No. 9 . . . . .	30	10	11

These tables show clearly that, despite the improvement noted, the Party as a whole has not yet seriously responded to the clear directives and line of the Central Committee and the decisions of the Party Plenums and Conferences for the basing of Party organisation inside the factories and workplaces. The fact that the recruiting of members in industry is not accompanied by a parallel growth in the number of Party units in the factories demonstrates that we have not yet sufficiently learnt how to build organisation in the process of our work. Additionally, it is apparent from this situation that altogether insufficient attention is given by the Party committees to the comrades who are recruited from industry. In hundreds of factories throughout Australia there are individual Communists who can and will build Party units round themselves if they receive leadership and assistance from the Party committees, if capable and experienced comrades work out with them in detail how to take up the problems of the workers and develop and lead their struggles, how to win the confidence of the workers, how to overcome the problems and difficulties that arise in the course of the work and how to build Party organisation in the factory.

How many individual Communists in important industries receive such attention and leadership from our responsible committees? In No. 4 District, where we have 41 per cent. of our members in industry but only 17 per cent. in factory units, it is perfectly obvious that such real leadership is not being given to our most important comrades. While the position is better in other Districts, particularly in No. 1 District, the same basic questions apply equally as forcibly.

Our immediate problem is not to hunt round for a whole number of new factories upon which to "concentrate," but rather to ensure that in every factory where there is a Communist that

there is organised and planned Communist work carried out under the direct supervision of the responsible Party committee.

In the sphere of trade union work, the position is shown as follows:—

#### PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MEMBERS IN TRADE UNIONS

No. 1 . . . . .	33 per cent.	No. 5 . . . . .	20 per cent.
No. 3 . . . . .	46 per cent.	No. 6 . . . . .	71 per cent.
No. 4 . . . . .	30 per cent.	No. 9 . . . . .	54 per cent.

These figures show that now a fairly high percentage of Party members are active in the trade unions, particularly in Districts 2, 6, and 9. At the same time, it is extremely doubtful if this represents the total number of members who can be active in the unions. Only in Nos. 1 and 6 Districts are there more members in trade unions than there are employed members in the Party, and if we take into consideration the fact that there are a fairly large number of unemployed members active in unions we must draw the conclusion that not yet have we reached a position where every member who is eligible is a member of and active in a trade union. In Nos. 3, 4, 5, and 9 Districts, the total of members in unions is less than the total number of members in industry. In No. 5 there are 31 members in industry and only 16 in trade unions.

The decisions of the 4th Plenum of the C.C. and the repeated directives of the C.C. have emphasised that work in the trade unions is our most important and vital phase of activity and that without the development of our activity in the unions we cannot carry out the tasks facing our Party. It is essential that this fact be understood clearly by the whole membership and that the percentage of Communists engaged in active trade union work be raised to a still higher level.

The percentage of financial members has shown considerable improvement over the past period. At present more than 50 per cent. of the membership is financial. However, while representing a step forward, this figure is still unsatisfactory. The decision of the 4th Plenum in relation to the Party membership being a dues-paying membership has still not been applied throughout the Party. Here is an immediate task for every D.C., S.C., and unit.

The figures on the women membership denote a particularly

serious situation. Only 8 per cent. of the total members are women. According to District, the position is as follows:—

No. 1 . . . . .	11 per cent.	No. 5 . . . . .	5 per cent.
No. 2 . . . . .	5 per cent.	No. 6 . . . . .	4 per cent.
No. 3 . . . . .	5 per cent.	No. 7 . . . . .	1 per cent.
No. 4 . . . . .	11 per cent.	No. 8 . . . . .	1 per cent.

These figures prove the amount of activity carried out by the Party generally among the working women and show clearly that the activity among the women workers and the recruiting of women to our Party has not yet become part and parcel of our day-to-day activities among the masses of the workers in general. This distortion in the composition of the Party must be given serious attention by every organ and member.

In the agrarian field there are now 38 country units with 211 members, or 11 per cent. of the total number of units and 8 per cent. of the total membership. These figures show a certain amount of progress, but the relative development of our organisation in the country areas as compared to the metropolitan areas is altogether too slow and out of proportion. The building of the Party in the countryside must be developed with more vigor than hitherto.

One of the outstanding weaknesses still characterising our work is the slowness of recruiting and the still high degree of fluctuation. From August, 1934, to January 1, 1935, the total recruits were 360 and the number expelled and lost in the same period was 103. In No. 4 District in this period recruits totalled 152 and the number lost and expelled 62.

Party committees will have to give serious attention to overcoming this unhealthy position. The recruiting of workers must be stimulated and a persistent campaign developed on this question. At the same time more attention must be given by the committees to the forms and methods of recruiting, who should be recruited, and how, directing the attention of the whole membership particularly to the factories and unions as the chief sources for recruiting to the Party.

While in the greatest number of cases fluctuation arises from the recruiting of undesirable elements, at the same time many workers leave our Party because of a whole variety of weaknesses in our own work—bad and monotonous working of units, inattention, overloading with work, failure to absorb into Party training, bureaucracy, etc., etc. Most units seem to consider that when a new recruit joins the Party he automatically becomes a thorough Communist and does not require advice

assistance, and comradely guidance in his work. If the new recruit is studied, his tasks discussed with him and decided with him on the basis of what he is suited for, if he is assisted in the carrying out of his tasks during his first period in the Party, if he is taught the role of the Party and how it works, and is drawn into study of Party theory, then only in rare cases will the new recruit leave our Party; rather will he develop into a good Communist.

The figures given above show a considerable organisational strengthening of our Party. During 1935, when we are preparing for the 15th anniversary of the founding of the C.P. of A., we must ensure that every activity of Party committees, units, fractions, and members is closely connected with strengthening and raising the fighting capacity and effectiveness of the Party. We must ensure that much more serious and real attention is given to carrying out the decisions of the C.C. on the building of the Party in the factories and trade unions, improving the composition and internal organisation, and raising the ideological level of the whole membership.



# The Menace of Relief Work

By R. CRAMM

The recent A.L.P. Metropolitan Conference made a feature of the condemnation of the "Permissible Income Regulations" and the "Prevention and Relief of Unemployment Act."

Many happenings point to the fact that the hardships and misery arising from this iniquitous legislation are to be made the basis for oceans of hypocritical election demagogy to entice the toiling masses to once again place their trust in a "Labor" Government.

The great majority of the delegates to the Labor Party Conference designated the "P.I.R." as "iniquitous," and one delegate from Lang's electorate said: "It was deplorable that parents should be debarred from receiving food relief because their children were earning a few shillings a week." In the words of "The Workers' Weekly": "The Labor Conference condemns Lang's legislation—but fails to indict him."

Members of the "Inner Group" were loudest in their castigation of the "P.I.R." and the "Premiers' Plan," despite the fact that they were the active supporters and apologists for the Lang Government when it introduced the legislation in N.S.W.

The line of the "Labor Daily" has been in conformity with this outburst. Editorials have been written and much ink spilt criticising Stevens in connection with both the "P.I.R." regulations and the "P.R.U." Act. But never a word about the fact that Lang introduced both measures or that the reactionary Stevens Government has not had to alter materially any of the essential clauses of the Acts to attack the wages and conditions of the workers.

The fact that the "Labor" Party leaders and their apologists are forced to take up this attitude of lying and deceit to hide the treachery of the Labor Party, and particularly Lang, is indicative of the growing suspicion and distrust, the rising indignation and ferment, against the "Labor" Party and its misleaders on the part of the broad sections of the A.L.P. members and supporters.

Let us treat at some length the Acts mentioned:—

In 1930, a Conference of Premiers and Commonwealth Ministers was convened; but due to differences of opinion as to the best methods to adopt in solving the crisis at the expense of the workers and in the interests of the capitalists, no finality was reached. Experts were appointed to prepare plans, and a further conference was set down for May, 1931.

At the May Conference, in 1931, the scheme, now known as the "Premiers' Plan," was adopted **unanimously**. Lang was in attendance at this Conference, and signed, along with all the others, the proposals put forward.

The essence of this Plan was to cut the wages of the workers, reduce pensions and maternity allowances, tighten up on the relief issue, retrench Public Servants, and reduce budget deficits to a minimum, all at the expense of the toilers.

Lang was well aware of the contents of this measure, and that he agreed with it is not only borne out by the fact of him signing the document in question, but is also reflected in legislation enacted by him as early as December, 1930, after the first Conference of Premiers disbanded.

In introducing the "P.R.U. Act," on Wednesday, December 17, 1930, Lang said, *inter alia*:

"No problem confronting the people is of greater importance than that of relieving the extensive unemployment in the community. So urgent is it that other matters have become relatively unimportant. Its cure calls for sacrifice from the community—a sacrifice which amounts to hardship, that must be borne equally by all sections. I admit that the Bill which I am introducing will not cure unemployment; it is but the first step in a series of proposals which will result in relief to those who are now distressed. The other plans which the Government has in mind are not so simple in operation, not so immediate in results, and because of that, this measure comes first. We are determined, however, that the equality of hardship shall be apportioned into every section of the community, and if those who work for wages receive their burden first, it is only that they may be more quickly relieved of it."—*"Hansard,"* No. 10, December 17, 1930.

In the quotation cited above, it will be seen that Lang was already foreshadowing further drastic legislation to ease the burden of the crisis at the expense of the toilers, legislation that would not be "so simple in operation."

This philistine reference to "equality of hardship" and "if those who work for wages receive their burden first, it is only that they may be more quickly relieved of it," reveals the conscious, direct application of the burden of the crisis to the working class.

What were some of the chief features of this Bill?

Section 6 reads:

"The Council shall consider means for the prevention and relief of unemployment, and may—

"(a) Formulate schemes for the absorption in any public works or private enterprises of persons out of employment;

"(b) Investigate and, if thought fit, approve of schemes for the relief of unemployment, including distribution of work amongst employees in any industry [Rationing, sharing of work.—R. C.] and the training of persons for whom no work can be found in the industry in which they have been employed."

The implications contained in the above clauses, the power given to introduce relief work into "any industry," to indulge in wholesale sharing of work, to relieve the capitalists entirely of the cost of keeping the unemployed and to place the burden on the backs of the workers, are tremendous. And they were instituted by a "Labor" Government!

Forty-six "Labor" members of the N.S.W. Legislative Assembly voted for this reactionary measure, this Act to break down the conditions and living standard of the toilers. Only one member, Gosling, failed to vote, and that was because he was absent!

Let us examine Section 9:

"(1) Where the Governor, on the advice of the Council or of the Minister, declares by notification published in the Gazette a work provided for the relief of unemployment, all wages, hours, and mode, terms, and conditions of employment of any person employed upon such work shall be such as the Minister may from time to time direct.

"(2) The provisions of this Section shall take effect notwithstanding the conditions of employment, whether statutory or otherwise, or of any award or industrial agreement."

Many hundreds of workers, Council employees, carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, etc., have cause to vividly remember this Act, the means of reducing them to the level of the relief worker. Stevens, during the course of the debate, and in reply to

Lang, on December 17, 1930, complimented the Lang Government in the following terms:—

**"I congratulate the Government on retaining the power to pay less than award rates on unemployment relief works!** Unless the Government is prepared to see the army of unemployed built up to proportions which will defy it, it will have to exercise that power later on. At the present time, no Government can afford to ignore the principle embodied in Section 9!"—"Hansard," No. 10, December 17, 1930.

Such a statement leaves no room for doubt as to the anti-working-class nature of the Bill. That the terms of the measure make provision for the over-riding of all awards, both Federal and State, is now very clear.

On the introduction of relief works into the Municipal and Shire Councils, Water and Sewerage Board, P.W.D., etc., the trade union bureaucrats took, and still take, the line of dependence on the Arbitration Court.

Statements that the "measure was unconstitutional," that "Award agreements were legally binding," etc., etc., were made by the union officials.

But what really happened when the Act was tested in court? Disillusionment soon came, when a worker named Kirby, a member of the W.S.B.E.U., employed at award rates by the Water and Sewerage Board, suddenly found his pay envelope light.

The union decided to summon the Board, and Industrial Magistrate Prior gave a verdict in favor of the union and the worker Kirby. The Board appealed to the Full Court, which upheld the appeal, on the following grounds: **"Once any work was declared 'relief work,' then the award no longer applied."**

With the recent introduction of relief work into the railways and tramways (Manly, North Sydney, etc.), the same line was put forward by the union officials, namely, that because the railway workers effected were covered by a Federal award, the "P.R.U. Act" could not affect them!

What a fallacious argument, as Judge Drake-Brockman's recent verdict indicates! The "learned judge," in dealing with the recent application of the N.S.W. Railway Commissioner for a variation of the A.R.U. Federal Award to allow relief workers to be employed on the railways, gave a verdict in favor of the Commissioners.

To further bear out the point that Federal awards do not apply once a work has been declared "relief work," we have only to cite Victoria, where relief work has been introduced into the railways on an extensive scale.

In view of these undeniable facts, this irrefutable evidence, any person who still persists in telling the workers that the Arbitration Courts, wage agreements, etc., will protect them from a worsening of conditions under the "P.R.U. Act" is a traitor and a scoundrel.

At the time of going to press, large numbers of the unemployed are being called up through the Department of Labor and Industry for work on the railways. They are examined by medical officers as to physical fitness and, if passed, are then drafted to the respective areas of Sydney to commence work on the permanent way.

They are told that they are to receive six months' work at award rates. What is the move behind this scheme?

Firstly, much of it is in the nature of election propaganda on behalf of the Stevens Government. Secondly, the desire to train and develop experienced groups of per-way and other workers to draft to the country on the country schemes being formulated by the Federal and State Governments. Thirdly, to prepare for a wholesale sharing of work of all lower-paid employees in the railway and tramway services, as a fore-runner of the same thing in private industry. Fourthly, if we can attach any significance to Judge Drake-Brockman's statement, to prepare to let a great deal of the railway work to contractors, and to supply them with trained labor through the Department of Labor and Industry.

The sharing of work appears to be the main possibility. Here the capitalists would relieve themselves of the £2,000,000 (approx.) at present being spent on food relief and its administration, whilst, at the same time, through the "P.I.R." compelling the workers, on the reduced wage, to keep unemployed daughters and sons who would not be entitled to relief, because the breadwinner would be receiving more than the amount allowed under the "P.I.R."

The application of the Act to industry generally, along the lines of sharing work, would not only give the capitalists increased production at lower costs, but would also make it possible for them to bring employees in for certain peak periods during the day for an hour or two and then send them back

home again. This is already done in some of the big stores, Hoskins' steelworks, etc.

The result of this would be that the workers would receive just sufficient to keep them off the dole and to place them outside the "P.I.R.," resulting in any other member of the family being refused relief assistance. The possibilities for attacking the workers' wages and conditions per medium of this Act are immense. The capitalists would get relief in the form of lowered costs, allowing them to compete with oversea countries, and, by a substantial reduction in taxation, get huge development works carried out at the expense of the toilers. Yet Lang placed this Act, with all its present essentials, on the statute book. The conclusion is obvious! It needs no further elaboration.

Before concluding, let us deal briefly with the "P.I.R."

These regulations, which were the cause of so much adverse comment at the Labor Party Conference, were issued by the Lang Government through the Minister of Labor and Industry, Baddeley, on June 15, 1931. The instructions were issued in the form of a confidential document to all food relief officers, defining the family unit and the income allowable, including food relief, on the various scales. Even if sixpence was earned over and above the amount allowed, the applicant was struck off relief. A questionnaire form, containing nineteen questions, was issued, and the recipients were compelled to fill this document in, in full, before any assistance could be obtained. The thirty-two questionnaire, issued by Stevens, is merely an extension of the nineteen questions brought out by Lang. The regulations were not altered in any way to extend this tightening up.

To enforce these "iniquitous" regulations, the Lang Government employed 90 food relief inspectors, who visited the homes of the unemployed and, by many underhand methods, excluded thousands from the food relief under one pretext or another.

Dealing with the question of single persons living at home, the regulations say: "Provided the income level of the whole family, including those over 21 years of age, renders them eligible for food relief, ration 'A' is to be issued in respect of those members over 21 years of age."

In an attempt to allow their parents to obtain relief assistance, many young workers who were receiving meagre wages left home. But, in an effort to circumvent this, the regulations laid down that such workers still had to support their parents and unemployed family if resident within 45 miles of the parents' home!

In defining the family unit, the confidential circular reads as follows:

"The family unit is to include all members of the family under 21 years of age, except infants under 12 months old, and embrace children of other parents under the age of 21 years residing with the applicant. The ration scale appropriate to the size of the family concerned to be issued. In the event of two families, or two branches of the one family, living under the same roof, each family shall be dealt with separately and not as one household."

It will be readily observed from the above that youths and young women up to the age of 21 years are classified as children, receiving only a child's allowance as a member of the family.

The wide scope of the measure, its definite anti-working-class character, is clearly seen when you peruse the clause dealing with "calculation of income":

"All income from all sources, including earnings, gifts of money, family endowment, Government charitable allowances, except where paid away in rent (rent receipts to be furnished), rents from property, 25 per cent. of amounts paid by boarders, value of food relief issued, military and invalid pensions (but excluding old-age pensions) of all members within the preceding 14 days should be taken into account in respect of each applicant."

Space will not permit us to develop further the many anomalies contained in these regulations. Sufficient has been said to prove that the "Labor" Party and the "Labor Daily" are treading on dangerous ground in resurrecting these skeletons from their cupboards.

Lang not only applied the decisions of the "Premiers' Plan," 1931, but, as we have shown, was actually developing similar proposals long before the "Plan" was ratified.

Arbitration and conciliation will not solve the matter for the toilers. The united front of employed and unemployed workers is the central question facing the masses in the struggle against the "P.R.U. Act" and the introduction of relief work conditions into industry.

Those who oppose this unity, who obstruct the building of unity organisation to rally and lead the masses in the fight, are agents of the exploiters in the ranks of the working class.

## Disintegration of Agriculture Revealed by Wheat Commission

By T. ENSFIELD

The second report of the Wheat Commission is one of the most interesting documents yet produced by the capitalist State in this country. The job of the commission was to provide a justification, on economic grounds, for capitalist policy in agriculture. Hence as far as its conclusions, embodied in a programme of recommendations, are concerned it has not produced anything new, but has provided a wealth of statistical material which enables us to accurately estimate the process of disintegration and degeneration taking place.

The recommendations are designed to solve the agrarian crisis in a capitalist way—by intensifying the poverty and ruination of the laboring masses of the country and by further plundering the masses of industrial consumers.

As forecasted in the last issue of the "Communist Review" the Commission has decided upon a home consumption price for flour. If applied to the extent proposed, the price of flour will rise to approximately £12, as compared with £7/5/- a ton prevailing at the beginning of the year—a heavy slug against the consumers. This, the main recommendation for the rehabilitation of the wheat industry, leads to others.

It leads to compulsory marketing in the form of a Commonwealth wheat pool, which means conscription by the State of the wheat crops. Under a compulsory pool it becomes a crime for a farmer to sell his own produce. He must deliver to the capitalist State in order that the State may disburse the proceeds among the exploiters, giving preference to the most powerful.

According to figures quoted recently by a reliable authority, 50 per cent. of the value of farm production is taken by the State in rent, interest, rates, taxes, and levies for payment to the bondholders after the expenses of administration have been met. This figure looks romantic at first sight, but when we take a look at the wheat industry according to the commission report, it becomes quite a sober reality. Thus the State has a decided interest in handling the proceeds from the sale of farm produce,

especially as in the past it has not always succeeded in trusting toilers, with families in want, to stand and deliver. The various State governments have long been striving to gain such a stranglehold on the impoverished wheat farmers. The Debts Relief Acts, especially in N.S.W., have proved hopelessly ineffective in achieving this purpose, because those who apply for relief are already bled dry, and are promptly rejected, and those who are not yet bled dry wink at the spider in the parlor.

However, the bourgeoisie is patient, and, unlike some of our Communist comrades, is not afraid to change tactics. It thinks that where its State politicians fail, Royal Commissions may succeed. So the home consumption price is linked with compulsory marketing, even at considerable risk of friction with sections of wheat merchants.

The commission, also, faithfully conforms with capitalist policy on the debt question in recommending compounding of debts in a way that assists the creditors to secure their position. The moralising on this question reads like the fable of the goose and the golden egg, except that in this case it is the golden grain at stake, even if the goose who grows it is nobody's concern.

A great deal was said about the £151,000,000 debt burden upon the backs of the wheatgrowers. In fact, this appears to have been the basic question confronting the commission. If the deliberation on the debt question produced nothing original from the point of view of capitalist policy, it certainly produced something decisive. Without beating about the bush, the report divides the wheat farmers into three economic groups, according to ability to produce at 3/- a bushel and pay debts. The groups are classified as follows:—

(1) Those who can pay their working expenses and meet their present interest charges when wheat is at 3/- a bushel f.o.r. ports (including Commonwealth assistance); (2) those who can pay their working expenses and pay some of their interest charges; (3) those who are unable to produce at 3/- a bushel even if they were free of all interest charges.

The report places 40 per cent. in the first group, 24 per cent. in the second, and 36 per cent. in the third. Very small and semi-proletarian farmers, growing less than 100 acres, are excluded from classification. (Needless to say, no phase of the report, so far published, takes the agricultural workers into account.) When we come to analyse the disposition of the 36 per cent. of hopeless cases, we discover they are mainly settled

in marginal areas. A proportion consists of persons on good land who bought during the post-war boom. Having differentiated thus, the report then proposes the elimination of the marginal farmers—as a form of restriction. True, there are some vague suggestions about saving some of them in one way or another.

The "Sydney Morning Herald," in its leading article, March 15, 1935, again takes up the cry for elimination of "unprofitable" farmers. This loathsome organ of finance capital, directly connected with the sugar monopoly, has campaigned consistently for the elimination of the marginal farmers, its main argument being that subsidising "inefficient" wheat farms unnecessarily raises the price of bread. If the ruined and impoverished wheat farmers of the Mallee could see behind this vicious rag the millionaire parasites who have plundered the sugar consumers, cane farmers, and workers of millions of pounds with the aid of every government during the past 20 years, they would perhaps learn a valuable political lesson. The thousands of evictions of wheatgrowers which have taken place in the past few years have not satisfied the gang behind the "S.M.H." It demands a more drastic process of elimination, and now that such a policy is suggested, with a mock semblance of originality, by a Royal Commission, it demands that these proposals be given effect to without delay.

It seems incredible that thousands of evictions could have taken place in the past few years without a powerful mass movement rising in resistance. There undoubtedly has been a widespread resistance to forced sales, but in a series of isolated actions. Yet the exploiters have managed, with the use of great tact and cunning, to drive thousands from the land without giving rise to a connected mass movement.

Capitalist greed, under the name of economic necessity, now impels big capital to undertake the perilous adventure of evicting not thousands, but tens of thousands of impoverished farmers. The report has confirmed the fact of the existence of tens of thousands of "unprofitable" wheat farmers, i.e., who cannot produce under present working costs, with the Commonwealth bounty thrown in, and pay interest! But why not permit them to carry on and sacrifice the interest, and even principal of their debts rather than proceed with the risk involved in evicting them?

Yes! But the trouble is that these so-called "inefficient, profitless," farmers would be taking their cut of the proceeds of



the flour excise which, under State marketing or compulsory pool, will be firmly in the clutches of the wheat exploiters. And besides, there is the problem of restriction to consider which the Australian ruling class accepts in practice in spite of its wordy protestations to the contrary. Internal economic contradictions are beginning to manifest themselves in the process of developing the home price policy. Buckland, chairman of the Bank of N.S.W., has perceived these contradictions and warned against them in his report to the Board of Directors early this year. Although the bourgeois economists formerly advocated a reckless expansion of agricultural production, they now are beginning to realise the impossibility of finding markets. Formerly they were content to dump any quantity of produce overseas so long as losses on exporting could be compensated by bounties to guarantee the profits of the exploiters. But now they are coming to the conclusion that as far as wheat is concerned more can be gained by curtailing excess production. Therefore, elimination of "inefficient" farms is to the exploiters an elimination of an economic waste, and so, according to the "S.M.H.," the "inefficients" must go.

This blow will fall heaviest upon the wheat farmers of South Australia, where approximately 11,000 of the 16,000 "inefficients" are located, cultivating land that yields but 19/- an acre, when it is estimated that £2 an acre is the minimum for economic soundness. In the whole State there are only approximately 2000 farms yielding above £2 an acre. Under such conditions, the job of eliminating the "profitless" farmers presents the authorities with a difficult problem, especially as a decided tendency towards a mass movement is already in evidence.

In West Australia, the process of elimination has been going on for some time, about 500 having been starved off last year. But many more "inefficients" are still left to be disposed of. At the annual conference of the Wheatgrowers' Union in February, Boyle, rich-farmer president, when referring to the fact that over 500 had been forced off in the past year, stated that unless adequate measures were taken to rehabilitate the industry double the number would be forced off this year. The commission has agreed to all the measures proposed by Boyle & Co. and will find in the Executive of the W.G.U. an able and enthusiastic ally in putting them, including the eliminations, into practice.

In Victoria, in the Mallee districts, a heavy toll has already been taken of the wheat farmers. Although, at the beginning

of the crisis and up to 1932, considerable resistance was made by the Mallee farmers against forced sales and evictions, the Government has since succeeded in getting rid of a large number by various artful devices. The Mallee farmers have learned some useful political lessons as a result of Government trickery and fraud, and are responding by giving support to the programme of the Farmers' Unity League.

N.S.W. has the largest proportion of "efficient" farms. Capitalist farming is more highly developed than in any other State. But a problem arises from the fact that the "inefficients" are concentrated in a few districts—mainly in the South-West—which will facilitate the development of organisation.

The foregoing summary of the wheat industry can be applied generally to all agricultural industries. Between 30 and 40 per cent. of the farmers definitely come within the classification of poor farmers faced with complete ruination and expropriation unless a desperate struggle for existence is waged against the offensive of the ruling robber class.

The second group, classified by the report—the middle farmers, the 24 per cent.—cannot be overlooked, because it is soon going to move down to the economic position of small farmers. But for the immediate future its position will be doubtful, because the bourgeois authorities have decided on a policy of temporarily placating it by promises of assistance. Therefore, this group will prove a source of disruption within the militant farm movement, although elements of it will support the programme of the F.U.L.

Although the rural workers were entirely overlooked by the lords of the Royal Commission, they will be an important factor in future developments. The report is particularly significant for the rural workers, because it plans to clear the way for a rapid transition to more highly developed capitalist farming, in which the wage-workers will hold a strong economic position. Strikes of the workers against the big wheat farmers for higher wages and better conditions will receive support from the small farmers.

The Communist Party must now intensify its efforts to establish Party and mass organisation in the rural districts, with special attention to the marginal wheat areas, for the purpose of giving direction to the movement of the impoverished farmers, and to the main towns for organising Bushworkers' Committees to develop the economic struggle of the agricultural workers.

The rural workers, plus 30 per cent. of the farmers struggling under Party leadership, coincidentally with a strike movement of industrial workers, will place the bourgeoisie in position for a shattering blow. All Party members must realise that such an event can be brought about if we all play our part in building and strengthening the Party.

The united front campaign must be extended to the rural districts wherever Party and A.L.P. organisation exists in a fight for the interests of the exploited and impoverished farm masses. All Party members in farm and rural organisations must work out concrete proposals for a united front of small farmers for the demands of the F.U.L. and of rural workers for better wages and conditions and adequate relief for the unemployed.

A consistent campaign to explain and popularise the Agrarian Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee must be waged among the small farmers and workers. We must remember that to correctly estimate economic and political developments is a comparatively simple matter, but to impart such knowledge to the masses and convince them of its correctness is more difficult and takes longer. It will be easier to convince the thousands of impoverished wheat farmers of the correctness of our Plenum forecast now than it was a year ago. So let us be consistent in our work, firm in the conviction that the masses of small farmers and rural workers can be won to the revolutionary movement under the leadership of the Communist Party.

Study the report of the Wheat Commission in the light of Lenin's teachings on the agrarian question and forge ahead with organisation to the rural masses in true Bolshevist style.