

The 'Statement' of 1905

As a critical juncture has arisen in the history of the Queensland Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party think it advisable to set forth a clear and definite statement of the present position and of the circumstances that have combined to produce it.

There was held in Brisbane last May a Labour Convention ... Out of the thirty-eight delegates, twenty-seven were not Parliamentarians. It must be evident that Members of Parliament who have had years of practical experience in public life are in the nature of things, at least equally fitted to frame a political programme that is possible of attainment within a reasonable time. It is not maintained that is possible of attainment within a reasonable time. It is not maintained that M's. L.A. alone should constitute a Convention but that as they are saddled with responsibility they should have a voice and vote in the building of a programme. One of the important items of business dealt with by the Convention was the formulating of an 'objective'.

The adoption of Objectives which only concern the very distant future is not the real business of a working Parliamentary Party. Whatever our ideals, or the ideals of our supporters, the business of a Parliamentary Party is to advocate and effect practical reforms. Such an objective as the 'Nationalisation of Monopolies' (adopted by the Federal Conference) is of a highly practical nature, easily understood and last but not least, it can be the business of the immediate future in Australian politics, rather than the concern of distant generations.

This element of unpracticability was unfortunately not confined to the objective but has crept into the Fighting Platform as witnessed by the existence of plank 11. This plank runs '*Immediate* stoppage of the sale of all Crown Lands—leasehold only; fixity of tenure'. This implies that the State shall not even sell a town or suburban allotment and that the homesteader or conditional selector would be unable to obtain the title deeds to his land. A change so sweeping even if desirable must of necessity be a gradual one. Had the plank been framed to read:

'(a) Stoppage of sale of land for revenue purpose (b) Stoppage of sales of land except for closer settlement (c) Inauguration of a perpetual lease-hold system with periodical appraisalment of rent'

one could have seen something practicable in the proposals.

The introduction of such impracticable elements is likely to have a two fold evil effect. It will infallibly drive away from the Party many of those who have been our earnest co-workers for years. It will also tend to prevent the Parliamentary Labour Party from co-operating with any other political party for purposes of progressive legislation.

Now it must be evident to anyone who has studied Australian politics for the last ten years that the many gains of Labour in the legislative arena have been won largely by a system of prudent alliances. These alliances are only possible so long as the counsels of the Parliamentary Labour Party are guided by moderation and sound sense. Not only is this the case, but the existence of a purely Labour Government would depend entirely on the practicability of its programme. Hence any extreme proposals that alienate from Labour the sympathy and support of every other political party in Parliament and outside Parliament can only have one result viz: the bringing back to office of powerful reactionary Conservative Government. In our opinion the mass of the people are not in sympathy with the extreme ideas favoured by the Convention, and any attempt to force such ideas suddenly on the community must inevitably end in calamity and failure.

It is still possible to draw up a platform of reform that will be in harmony with Labour ideals and it is still possible to guard by a wise moderation against the danger of an overwhelming Conservative reaction. It is with the object of retaining the sympathetic

support of the many friends outside who wish us well and of avoiding a fatal division in our own ranks that we call for a new Convention framed on a wider basis.

George Kerr, Chairman PLP
George P. Barber, Hon. Sec. PLP

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