

SOCIALIST COMMENT

SOCIALIST
PARTIES
OF
AUSTRALIA and
NEW ZEALAND

VOL. II, No. 10.

JUNE, 1947.

ONE PENNY

KICK US ABOUT!

Labor Governments Get Fresh Mandate to "Put The Boot In"

To many people living outside Australia, we must seem fortunate in our choice of governments. Those who regard Labor Parties as advantageous for workers must envy our plethora of Labor Governments. Yet, the only reason offered by most Labor supporters for boosting Labor candidates is "They are the best of two evils." Dyed-in-the-wool laborites and their "Communist" jockeys invariably parrot this cry when confronted by Socialist argument against voting for the Labor Party.

We are told that we are throwing away votes if we register a desire for our object by writing "SOCIALISM" across our ballot papers. Voting for "the best evil" when the working class could abolish "all evils" does not strike our opponents as being the least bit illogical.

RECENT ELECTIONS.

Since the conclusion of the war, the Labor parties have been steadily losing ground and while not sufficient in all cases to put them out of office, there has been a marked trend against Labor governments. In Western Australia, the poll (following closely on attacks made by the Labor Government on the local workers on the industrial field) resulted in the Labor Government being pushed out in favour of avowed capitalist henchmen.

In South Australia, the one State where Labor was not in office, the electors turned away from its candidates as bitterly as they did in West Australia. So upset was one Labor vote-chaser, Mr. P. H. Quirk, member for Stanley, S.A., that he moaned: "Capitalism is dead and Socialism should be buried with it"; to which, we can imagine, many of his conferees silently but reverently whispered "Amen".

The results in W.A. and S.A. were regarded as pointers for the later elections in New South Wales and Queensland. With two successive defeats the whips began to crack and the combined efforts of the Labor Parties, the Trade Unions, the "Communist" Parties and certain sections of the Capitalist class were harnessed for the struggles ahead. In some Queensland electorates "Communist" Candidates stood down to facilitate Labor Party chances of winning seats.

WHAT WAS OFFERED?

The programs of the contending parties left little to choose from; each seemed bent on stealing as much of the other's policy as it could at the same time condemning their opponents for having such a policy! Each party promised houses by the thousand "for the people"; new deals in education; "continued prosperity" and abolition of depressions; in short we

were promised all the usual capitalist panaceas for the future. But N.S.W. Labor Premier McGirr set his masters at ease from the outset when he said:

"I regard the preservation of our Social Structure as a Sacred Trust, and I state emphatically that no party and no individual will be allowed to undermine that structure." (Standard Weekly, A.L.P., Sydney, 18/4/47).

While he prated about "Labor standing for Freedom" his counterpart, Queensland Labor Premier Hanlon, was gloating over his newly introduced Arbitration Bill which made strikes illegal, increased penalties, and legally trussed workers who objected to his anti-working class legislation.

The Liberals and Country Party candidates tried to out-promise their craftier Labor opponents, thus making the going hard for "Communist" candidates who had to find "new" promises for their followers. The capitalist press pointed out that there was little or no difference between Labor and Liberal policies. It practically ignored the silly platitudes of the Communist Party, whose N.S.W. and Australian "Leader" J. B. Miles, in an endeavour to catch the Country vote dug up this tit-bit:—

"The Communist Party calls for a new deal for farmers and rural workers by increased prices for butter, milk and eggs. THESE COMMODITIES COULD BE INCREASED IN PRICE WITHOUT AFFECTING THE WAGE EARNER BECAUSE THEY ENTERED INTO THE CALCULATIONS OF PRICE FLUCTUATIONS FOR FIXING THE BASIC WAGE." (Tribune, 22/4/47).

"The exploitation of the working class as an economic process cannot be abolished or softened through legislation in the framework of bourgeois society."

—ROSA LUXEMBURG.

Of such stuff are Commissars made; yet there are thousands of people who take Mr. Miles seriously!! The explanation for the many worshippers may be found in the following which appeared in the "Tribune" (A.C.P. Official Organ) seven days later, under the heading, "Who can join the Party?"

"Some people think they have to be an industrial worker to join the Communist Party. . . Others think you cannot join if you go to Church. . . You can be of any color, sex, RELIGION or nationality. . . YOU CAN STILL GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY AFTER YOU JOIN, AS MANY OF OUR PRESENT MEMBERS DO. YOU COULD BE A BRAHMIN OR

A YOGIST AND IT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE" . . . (Emphases in each quote ours).

A Yogist!!! Ye gods and holy rebels. Is it any wonder there are so many confused followers of the numbing jumbo of so-called Communist leaders? The writer, inwardly smitten by some recollection of one who said: "RELIGION IS THE OPIUM OF THE PEOPLE" tries to recover himself by stating: "We uphold the Marxist Materialist Philosophy".

This Jesuitical reservation is typical of the religion of Communists who have taken many of their "attitudes of mind" from their Catholic Action opponents. Every stunt, religious or reactionary, was put on by all parties to catch votes. The Capitalists supporting the Labor Party, though outwardly pleased, inwardly must have been disturbed by the falling off in the vote. In Queensland, where the voting is "first past the post" and where electoral boundaries have been suitably gerrymandered, the Labor Party retains power with a MINORITY vote. The Labor Deputy Premier lost his seat. With typical Churchillian technique, the Labor Premier, immediately after the numbers went up, said: "THE DIFFICULT DAYS ARE NOT OVER." Only those who have lived under a Queensland Labor Government can appreciate the full significance of such a remark.

After 32 years of Labor rule he was STILL PROMISING, on behalf of his Party, those things which his predecessors promised 32 years ago. On May Day, he was emphasising the old, old story about the strike weapon being obsolete but never a word about abol-

ishing the system which makes strikes inevitable.

UPS AND DOWNS

In New South Wales, the Labor Party lost some seats and also many votes in seats they won. The Country Party gained a few and the skids seemed to be under the Lang Labor Party who just managed to retain their two seats on preferences. The Communist Party figures reveal the "fair weather" nature of its supporters, both in Queensland and New South Wales. The comparatively large vote of 1944 reflected the Party's attitude toward the war when it cashed in on patriotism and muscled in on Red Army popularity. But now that

patriotism has been placed temporarily in "cold storage" and there has been some debunking of the "Army studies" in "Foreign Travellers" are falling a bit behind. The votes stamped; candidates who polled 5,000 in 1944 failed to drag 2,000 in 1947. There was a similar decline in the Queensland A.C.P. member for Bowen scored less votes with more voters on the

The Liberal Party gets little comfort from the results. With industry almost at a standstill in Victoria due to strikes and lock-outs; with workers groaning under pegged wages with soaring prices; with the Government making no promises, the Liberals made little headway. Those Capitalists who support them will be veering toward the Labor Party and lining up with those other sections of the Capitalist class who always find Labor a willing horse. As the Political Roundman in the Daily Telegraph, 27/7/47, says:

"Labor has obviously secured financial support from sources which normally would be supporting the opposition."

NOTHING GAINED FOR THE WORKERS.

One thing stands out clearly when reviewing the election results. The "Reds" seems to have lost its appeal as a vote catcher for the Liberals. But "Communist" lost votes not because workers thought they were "Red" but because in many cases workers thought the so-called "Reds" were too reactionary.

Reconciling themselves to defeat, Liberal editors pressed the similarity between Labor and Liberal policy and hoped that Labor Premiers would be able to carry out their promises. (As if they ever did.)

As usual, the workers gained nothing because no Party running candidates represented their interests. Actually the return of two more state Labor Governments will encourage the Federal Labor Government to continue its attacks on the working class. The Liberal Party and Country Parties and knowing that they can always count on the support of the "Communist" Party present day and tomorrow, the Australian Labor Government will continue to treat the workers of this country with contempt. That which they fear most is a **SOCIALIST WORKING CLASS**, is non-existent. **IT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE SO** —W.J.C.

ON THE FARM.

Increased productivity under Capitalism means increased unemployment. Only with a common ownership in a classless democratic society can the potential plenty become a boon instead of a curse. That the possibilities for plenty are tremendous is demonstrated from an unusual angle by figures on the progress in animal husbandry. In 1917 the average hen laid 69 eggs per year. In 1927 she laid 103 eggs per year, and in 1945 the average was 152 eggs yearly.

Ordinary unimproved cows produce about 1000 pints of milk per year. Dairy cows average 45000 pints, but specially bred cows average as much as 100,000 pints.

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Ourselves

In this paper appeared. Under the title of "The first roneed issue of May 1944." Under the heading of "Our difficulties our Sydney comrades wrote and roneed the sheet nearly every month. Right the sheet roneed to see the first printed newspaper but naturally the authorities were not keen to sanction a paper. The applications for this nature were refused again and again, and it was not till December 1944 that Sydney branch had the satisfaction to see the first printed newspaper. From then on the paper appeared irregularly, and later each issue was not the same time a generous donation enabled the party to round off the "Comment" on a firmer basis. For over a year, many thousands of free copies were distributed all over Australia. However, the money available for free distribution has long since gone. Since September in Melbourne it is sold in Australia, USA, Canada, New Zealand and England. Copies are sent to France, West, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy.

Even if every copy printed were sold, we would just barely meet expenses. But currency restrictions and other factors prevent a profitable sale. Thus we are faced with a deficit every month. This is nothing new — lack of funds is a chronic disease — we have "Red" but because in many cases workers thought the so-called "Reds" were too reactionary.

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HOW IT IS RUN.

For those of you who are not acquainted with the organization of the SPA it may be of interest to explain how the paper is produced. The Executive Committee annually elects an Editorial Committee, consisting of three people. They, in turn, agree on a Secretary, whose job it is to see that sufficient articles are on hand, to arrange exchanges and to look after the lay-out etc. All articles have to be approved by a majority of the Committee, which is responsible to the P.C. and, in turn, to the party as a whole.

Now, while realizing that we cannot do anything startling within a 4-page paper, we feel that we could produce a better job if we knew more accurately exactly what type of article you would like to see. For instance, some months ago we were told by various members sympathetic that not enough local material appeared. Since then, we have run a number of articles from New Zealand and Australia on various strikes.

What about letting us know what you would like to see printed? Is there any feature you like or DON'T like? Even if you have purely negative criticism, let us have it. Don't just accept what we say—write in to our "Forum" with your questions and objections.

If you want to give us practical assistance you can—
1. Donate regularly to our "Press Fund."
2. Subscribe to the "Comment" (2/6 per year) and get others to do likewise.

- 3. Send for free sample copies to distribute.
 - 4. Send us cuttings.
 - 5. Let us know what you do not like about the paper, and why.
 - 6. Give us your newsprint or stock our pamphlet "Socialism or Chaos."
- The Editorial Committee.

CUTTINGS & COMMENTS

THE GLORY OF ARBITRATION.

1.—40-hour Weeks.
"Since the 40-hour week hearing began in Melbourne 4,875,000 words were taken down and transcribed by official shorthand writers. At 150 words a minute, this would be equivalent to 133 weeks of talking."
"Herald" 2/11.

2.—"Prepared."
"I don't agree with those people who I understand have been describing me by very objectionable names because they say I will not give them a 40-hour week. They say I only work 171 hours a week. I am prepared to work my colleagues 1940 hours a week and I am prepared to work 96 hours, but I am not prepared to work my colleagues more than 80 hours — and that stands." (A.C.P. News, Judge Drake-Brockman "Age" 30/4).

3.—"Failure."
"I wish to say with regard to the Arbitration Court that, in my opinion arbitration has been a failure in Australia... we are in a worse position today under the arbitration system than we were before." (Nationalist, Senator Drake-Brockman, in the Federal Parliament, July 13, 1922).

4.—"Impartiality."
"Of all cases decided by the Court between 1921 and 1940 73.3% were decided in favor of the employers, and 26.7% in favor of the workers." ("Age" 6/9/46, full quote in "Socialist Comment" November 46).

ATOMIC BIBLES?
"The United States should go its way with an atomic bomb in one hand and the Bible in the other... Our forerethers settled this land with a rifle in one hand and the Bible in the other. There has never been a better formula for national defence." (US Senator E. M. F. in "Herald" 6/5).

DOPE FEDDLARS.
In our April issue we had a little item "Kiss and Tell," which described the story of a Communist kissing the Pope's ring. Now comes news that Palmiro Togliatti, boss of the Italian Stalinists "came down in a very unenthusiastic attitude to receive the Catholic Church." By the grace of Togliatti the Italian Assembly last week put in the Republic's constitution this clause: "The Roman Catholic apostolic religion is the only religion of the State." This means that all Italians must pay taxes in support of the Catholic Church; education will be Catholic; and the State's treaties with the Pope will be honored. ("Time" report in "Sydney Sunday Telegraph" 13/4).

Perhaps the day will come when the local Communist will raise a new slogan: "JOE FOR POPE!" What will the Catholic Actionists do then?
TRUTH IN WARTIME.
The "Herald" (Mr. Noel Baker) has now revealed that on September

(Continued on Page 3, Col. 3.)

VICTORY OR DEFEAT

The Metal Trades Dispute.

Since the end of the war a number of big strikes has swept Australia. The recently concluded Metal Trades Dispute lasted over 18 months, and reveals more clearly than anything else what the Unions can achieve and what they cannot.

Starting with an apparently "normal" struggle for marginal increases of 11 a week, the crisis turned into a rank-and-file fight against not only the employers and the court, but also the Cain State Labor Government and the Australasian Council of Trade Unions.

Pressure on the AEU to give in was tremendous. A well-organized press campaign magnified every little incident that occurred; the Union was accused of being dominated by Communists; the public was said to be "blazing with indignation" at the absence of trains and buses. Though the AEU fought only in Victoria, and though the Acting Chief Judge had pre-judged the case by stating that the "11 a week extra, if paid, would greatly jeopardise the Australian economy, and I would never assent to it— and without my assent it cannot be paid", the Unions ignored all threats and continued the struggle, against the wishes of the ACTU.

In the circumstances, the expected settlement, providing for marginal increases of 15/- per week, 11/- per week is pretty good. It was achieved because whatever we may think of the gradual withdrawal of men, instead of a lightning one, the fact that the AEU rank-and-file were fully behind their District Committee and acted very sensibly in ignoring the red baiting of the press. Even more important, of course, is the fact that a majority of the strikers were able to get other jobs. As long as the present high level of employment lasts — and it does, no signs yet of falling — the main weapon of the bosses in breaking strikes, unemployment, cannot be used with any great effect. So much was this the case, that 1000 Manufacturers boomeranged on the employers, many workers being able to find better paid and more pleasant jobs.

As at present a Melbourne Newspaper is charged with alleged contempt of the Arbitration Court, for suggesting that the court merely acted as a rubber stamp on an agreement forced on it by industrial pressure, we shall not write anything about this aspect.

A word on the ACTU and Mr. Clary. Their attempt to order the Engineers and Truck Drivers to smash the solidarity of the informal AEU-ARU-PIA-FEDPA alliance failed. Defeating their attempted sell-out to the Assistant Secretary NSW Trades and Labor Council stated they had tried to "save the Victorian Government from defeat. It would have had to resign if the dispute had lasted much longer." ("Age" 6/10). This "defence", in fact, is just the worst indictment against the ACTU and its ALP

stogeos. Instead of trying to help the engineers in getting increases, they attempted to force them back to work for fear that the floating vote for the Cain Government might be alienated. The dispute shows even more clearly that those union officials who are tied up with the ALP cannot possibly assist effectively in the industrial struggle of the workers.

When all is said and done, and if the rumoured marginal increases are put into effect, engineers will be back where they were in 1907. Then, their margins were three sevenths of the basic wage. In 1921 they were cut to two sevenths, and now, if they really get the 15/- increase, they will again be three sevenths.

Strikes, especially at present when conditions are much more favourable than usual, are essential. But industrial action alone cannot lead to the overthrow of a system where the workers always get the worst of the bargain. Conscious political action for the overthrow of the capitalist system in Australia, there are no signs that any appreciable body of workers is beginning to see this.

DAN DESMOND.

ON THE FARM

(Continued from Page 2)
as 10,000 pints. (The record is about 42,000 pints.)

Another development is artificial insemination, by which, in the case of cows, one sire may be used over 100 times, as much for females as by the "natural" method. This means that the desirable characteristics of outstanding but numerically small strains can be rapidly transmitted, and reduces the number of male animals required. In the US, during 1945, over 250,000 dairy cows were bred by the use of artificial insemination.

(Figures from "Science" US Magazine, October 4th, 46.)

CUTTINGS (Continued from Page 2)
15, 1940, now commemorated as "Battle of Britain" Day, the Germans lost only 56 aircraft. We claimed 183, and the Germans admitted losing 43. "Herald" 15/5/41.

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TWO BOOKS

"The Australian People, 1788-1946" by Brian Fitzpatrick. (279 pp. 12/6; Melbourne University Press).

Mr. Fitzpatrick is the only Australian historical writer with an international reputation. His 2-volume study "British Imperialism and Australia" and "British Empire in Australia" is the standard reference work, and deservedly so. In this his latest volume, he has succeeded in bringing all the essential facts together and interpreting them from an approach very closely allied to the materialist conception of history. This is by far the best one-volume history of Australia yet written.

The author is especially good in showing the great influence of British Imperialism on Australian development. "The economic structure which has been developed in Australia differs from most others in having been made, and from time to time adapted to imperial patterns in a quite extraordinary degree. In this view the ALP has no ordinary completeness... The whole of the Australian mind could be claimed as any existing title. As soon as it became clear that Australia could be worked profitably as a base for territorial enterprise, it could be planned as such" (p. 11).

We have no space to review the book adequately, so will confine ourselves to saying that on the whole there is very little with which to quarrel. Mr. Fitzpatrick is perhaps inclined to attach too much importance to the influence of Roman Catholicism on the ALP. He seems to think that the cold-storage of the so-called "socialisation objective" is largely due to Catholic influence. (This is rather a sweeping statement. (p. 29-30).

At bottom, however, the author's appraisal of the ALP is sound enough. "The structure of nineteenth century unionism was canalised and diverted by the Australian Labor Party, which came into being about 1891 and enlisted industrial workers, under banners attractively splashed with socialist slogans for the task of Australian nation-building for others profit. But the sense of protestant solidarity persisted. Even the most 'advanced' Australian workers in this century have indeed no widely to the other side of the 'save my ship'." "For good or ill it (the ALP) did not operate as the political organ of an economic class... The long history of its function has been to mobilise the working-people, its constituents, to that task of nation-building through a capitalist economic system, which the middle classes for their part have generally applied themselves by means of political organisations wearing a variety of other names. In this view the ALP has no time represented an working-class efforts which had failed, after Eureka and the first Eureka Day in 1854 and 1856." The Labor Party was expected to supplement in the parliaments, efforts for working-class betterment by the unions; but it did a role as prominent as any in the making, from about 1912-4, of Australia after patterns of industry. But it has not so far been in opposition to either the principle of capitalist organisation of the national economy, or the continued domination of capitalism in Australia by overseas groups. It has long been demonstrably a mistaken view of the Labor party, whereas

ther from a standpoint of the right or the left, that the party represents a social philosophy different at root or in aim (for practical purposes) from that of politicians grouped on the opposite benches of the houses of parliament." (p. 42, our emphasis.)

"Commonwealth political history is superficially a story of contending parties and their rival policies. But actually very little in it shows any abrupt or remarkable departure from previous major policy, on occasion of the defeat of one party administration and its replacement by an administration of another colour." (p. 239).

In short, Mr. Fitzpatrick shows very well the "similarity of outlook of all the parliamentary parties which co-operated to build federal Australia on a secure capitalistic foundation." (p. 240).

The book is well written and makes fascinating reading, though, owing to its division in three parts (one giving a general survey, the second dealing with economic history and the third bringing the two together) there is a certain amount of repetition.

To sum up: Well worth buying. "You, Me and the Ballot Box," by Frank Casey (72 pp. 1/-, Left Book Club of Victoria).

Deals with the set-up of the Australian organs of government, how they are elected and how they function. Includes extracts from the United Nations Charter, which should be closely studied by anyone who wishes to learn how best to string together meaningless abstractions which APPEAR to make sense.

There are references to Democracy as being the "will of the people" and the author adopts the conventional division of parties into "right" and "left." Such terms are so vague and confusing that it would be better to drop them.

To sum up: Contains enough factual information to make it useful.

P.S.—It looks as if Mr Casey's information as to the payment of Federal M's.H.R. will soon be out of date as they intend to increase their salaries by 50 per cent.—to £1,500 a year. If the Labor Party can't introduce the millennium for the workers at least they're making a start in introducing it for M'sP—from the top! The "Golden Age" MUST be at hand!

—H.H.—

"PRESS FUND."

Donations received:— Melbourne: J.T., £1; P.J.B., 2/-; L.N., 5/-; G., 1/-; Y.L., 5/-; A.B., 10/-; Geelong: E.T., £1. Forcett, Tas.: W.D., 2/6. Total: £3/8/6.

CORRECTION.

The ACTU conference takes place every 3 years, not every 2 years as stated in our May issue.—Ed. Comm.

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Just out: 22, Bolshevism — to 1914 (SPA).

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LECTURES MELBOURNE.

June 3rd: "New Trends in Stalin's Russia" (Holmes).
June 17th: "The Iron Man and the Inner Man — A Study in Contrasts (Den- ners).

July 1st: To be announced.
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The Socialist Parties of Australia and New Zealand hold:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the

monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic, the overthrow of the powers of government, and the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. THE SOCIALIST PARTIES OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND therefore enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and call upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under their banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Those agreeing with the above principles and desiring enrolment apply to nearest address.

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