

Manifesto of the Australian Socialist League to the People of Australia, September 1894

In consequence of the rapid industrial development of the last few decades—a development remarkable chiefly for the displacement of manual labor by the ever-increasing labor-saving machine, and the creation of a PERMANENT AND MENACING UNEMPLOYED CLASS—our industrial and social institutions are in a condition of fermentation and dissolution. A feeling of uncertainty and discontent is taking possession of all classes, and the efforts made by the ruling class to patch and mend a state of things that has become intolerable have proved vain and inadequate. No sooner is one prop in the shape of a law set up to support the tottering house than it is discovered that at ten other spots support is still more needed.

Among the workers, the feeling of discontent with their present industrial conditions is rapidly increasing, and more thought is devoted every year by them to the problem of how to better their unhappy lot. To them especially the Socialist movement appeals for appreciation and support.

We live today in what is called the 'CAPITALISTIC' AGE. THERE ARE TWO GREAT CLASSES OF SOCIETY—the one, the CAPITALISTS, owns land and capital; the other, the WORKERS, owning nothing except the power to labor. THE MODERN WAGE-EARNER RECEIVES ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE PRODUCT OF HIS LABOUR, the other two-thirds being taken by the Capitalist who employs him or who employs his employer. THE CAPITALIST ERA IS CHARACTERISED BY INTENSE COMPETITION which is felt by the workers in the steady lowering of the standard wage rate, and by the small business men in the fierceness of the struggle which they have to wage against the wealthy capitalists in their own lines of industry, and their steady disappearance as a class through their innumerable bankruptcies.

GIGANTIC ARMS like mammoth dealers and the colossal manufacturers and producers are rapidly crushing out of existence the small employers.

THIS CONCENTRATION OF INDUSTRY, and the more extensive use of LABOR-SAVING MACHINERY, causes a steady diminution in the demand for labor and a steady increase of the unemployed class, from whose ranks are drawn the armies of MISCALLED FREE LABORERS that defeat every effort made through the medium of strikes by organised labor to better its conditions.

The worker who attempts by frugality and industry to accumulate and to start in business as his own employer is today confronted with inevitable ruin, being compelled to compete on unequal terms with the great CAPITALISTIC RINGS who dominate every department of industry.

THUS THE IRON CIRCLE IS COMPLETE. The worker is shut in and it is only in extremely rare cases he succeeds, either individually or through an organisation in raising himself out of the condition of dependence in which everything conspires to keep him. Let it be remembered that the cause of all these evils is the steady concentration of Land and Capital in the hands of the few, and the depriving of the workers of all ownership of them.

The only cure will then be seen to be the Socialising of Land and Capital; that is, to let the State, AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL, be the only Capitalist and Landowner, and consequently the only employer. Every citizen must have a share in the ownership of all the Land and all the Capital in the country. Every citizen must have a right to employment, on farms and stations, in workshops and warehouses, owned by the State or the Municipality and controlled by administrators elected by the people. If there is not room for everyone, working hours must be reduced all round, until there is. There must be work for all and overwork for none.

There being then no idle owning Class, the entire produce of the Nation will be distributed on principles of just[ice]. At present Landlords and Capitalists own all the means of production, and take immense tribute in the names of Rent, Interest and Profit.

Under Socialism, the method of production would remove the competitive system, by placing under official administration such departments of production as can be managed collectively (Socially or co-operatively), as well as the distribution among all of the common produce of all, according to the productive labor of each.

ANARCHIC COMPETITION, which enables dishonesty and cunning, instead of merit to succeed, would end, and National Co-operation (under which rational competition—the desire to excel, the joy in creative work, the longing to improve, the eagerness to win social approval) would take its place.

There will then be NO UNEMPLOYED and NO SWEATING, there will be leisure for all and education and happiness for all.

With the abolition of Private Ownership of Land and Capital, the purification of Government would follow. One half of Parliamentary corruption is due to Land Jobbing, and the other to Capitalistic "Private Enterprise", which is but a gentler name for Public Fraud.

To achieve these results we advocate only the use of Parliamentary means. We HAVE NOTHING BUT THE STERNEST REPROBATION FOR THOSE MISGUIDED AND DESPERATE MEN WHO ADVOCATE EITHER OPEN VIOLENCE OR SECRET CRIME.

We propose to form a Parliamentary Socialist Party, and thus alter legislation in the direction of Socialism. Already the people own, through the Government, many industries—Railways, Post and Telegraph Offices, & Co. There is no reason why the list should not be extended until it embraces all.

The CORRUPTION which at present characterises the PUBLICLY-OWNED INDUSTRIES is due to their being controlled in accordance with PRESENT-DAY COMMERCIALISM and to the fact that the competitive system in vogue outside acts and reacts upon them. WHEN ALL INDUSTRIES are publicly owned, the evils complained of to-day will certainly disappear.

These are the aims and methods of the Australian Socialist League. Our principles will be found to be altogether different from the wilful misrepresentation of them which are current.

Socialism has nothing to do with ATHEISM or with any religious views.

It does not mean that it is either necessary or [?possible] to alter human nature. IT DOES NOT PROPOSE TO "MAKE ALL MEN [?EQUAL]". It means no contempt for machinery, no dislike of education or culture, no enmity to brain work or invention.

WE SIMPLY CONTEND THAT BY NATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND BY THAT ONLY—BY EXTENDING THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE AS AN EMPLOYER, CAN THE WHOLE OF THE PEOPLE BE PLACED IN A POSITION OF DECENT, RATIONAL AND MANLY INDEPENDENCE.

JOIN the ranks of the AUSTRALIAN SOCIALIST LEAGUE, and help forward of yourself and your children. Let no one underrate his or her power, or imagine that one more or less makes no difference. No one, not even the weakest, can be dispensed with for furthering the advance of humanity.

Signed on behalf of the Australian Socialist League W.P. MITCHELL, General Secretary. Leigh House, Castlereagh St., Sydney September, 1894

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in David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution*,
pp.257-258