



BUILDERS
of
COMMUNISM

A Report on the 21st Congress
of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

by

E. F. ("Ted") HILL

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BUILDERS OF COMMUNISM

Much has been written about the Soviet Union. Very many people of diverse political views are deeply interested in it and their number increases year by year. The daily press — no friend of the Soviet Union — writes more about it than it writes on any other single subject.

History was made at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which I attended as a member of the fraternal delegation from the Communist Party of Australia. It was a congress at which the dream of Communists to build a society in which the slogan "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" began to assume flesh and blood. To Communists, to all mankind, it is a momentous event. Its deliberations will be studied and thought over for a long time. They will be discussed and debated by friend and foe of the Soviet Union. My contribution is that of one who was present at the Congress and heard the deliberations and saw something of Soviet life. To me words are not adequate to describe fully the grand picture of the new way of life in the Soviet Union but what follows is an attempt to give some description.

At the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the developments of the past were reviewed and a comprehensive plan for the next seven years (1959-1965) was agreed upon.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union leads the Soviet people. It is a party of the Soviet people — of over 8,000,000 members. Everything it does is for the interests and advancement of the Soviet people. Consequently, its Congress could be expected to reflect just those interests.

There will be few people who have not heard or read of the incredible backwardness of Czarist Russia, i.e., the Russia before 1917. The literature of Russia — Tolstoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Gorky — reflects the terrible conditions under which the people lived. Terrible poverty, illiteracy, oppression were their lot. Industrially Czarist Russia was very backward.

Tired of World War I which intensely aggravated their lot, the Russian people in November 1917, rejected the Czar and all he stood for, and under the leadership of the Communist Party, established the power of the workers and peasants.

For over forty-one years now the Soviet people have built a new society. They have had to contend with a heritage of extreme backwardness, with the destruction of the wars of intervention in the years following 1917, the terrible war of 1941-1945 and the destruction wrought by it. It is safe to say that half the time since the foundation of the Soviet State has been spent in fighting against aggressors or in repairing the damage caused by aggressors.

It is in that background that we must consider the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which has been called the Congress of the Builders of Communism.

"FROM EACH ACCORDING TO HIS ABILITY . . ."

From the very beginning of the Soviet State, the Soviet people have been working to create the conditions whereby the objective of "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" would be realised. That is, everyone will work in his particular job and with modern methods of production such an abundance of goods will ultimately be produced that each person in the community will be able to satisfy his needs. The principle is easy to understand if you think of a family in our society with an income sufficient to satisfy its needs. Each member of the family satisfies his needs by taking from the family pool what food or other necessities he requires. No other member of the family questions his right to do so. So Soviet society aims to produce such an abundance of goods that all its members will be in a position similar to that of the family used in the illustration. The problems discussed by the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were largely concerned with lifting Soviet production to the level where this principle could be realised. Everything is done to satisfy the material and cultural needs of the people — no capitalists exist to reap private profit nor to distort production to realise some immediate profit while fundamental necessities are neglected as they are in Australia.

INCREASED PRODUCTION

Almost by their own unaided efforts the Soviet people have lifted industrial output 36 times over the level of 1913. While

during the great economic crisis of the 1930s, production in the leading capitalist country — United States — dropped by a third as against 1929, in the socialist Soviet Union it much more than doubled. But today, despite World War II and the loss of tremendous material resources, and the even more terrible loss of over 11,000,000 irreplaceable Soviet lives, industrial and agricultural output have increased to new high levels.

SHORTER HOURS

So much is that so that at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it was possible to talk in terms of completing in 1960 the changeover to a 7-hour day for factory and office workers, and for miners and others engaged in heavy work, a 6-hour day. This was planned at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in 1956 and since then has been largely implemented. At present, the Soviet workers work a 6-day week. But think of the far cry from the conditions of work in Czarist times. And think too that this new reduction is the act of the Soviet people themselves — they do not have to struggle against a violently antagonistic employer for such a benefit nor do they have to go through the arbitration machinery with its outlawing of strikes, severe penalties and grave restrictions on the rights and liberties of trade unions and trade unionists. No, the Soviet people and their Party soberly appraise their development and their potential and make such a decision. Their review of that development and its potential, led them to decide that in 1962 the people who are now working a 7-hour working day will work a 40-hour week, and in 1964, miners and those on heavy work will commence to go over to a 30-hour week, while the rest will start to go over to a 35-hour week. If you look at Soviet industry you will know that the interpretation of heavy work is a very much more liberal one than here in Australia.

PLANS THAT WILL BE REALISED

Perhaps people will object that this is all in the future: they will say what guarantee is there that it will be fulfilled. As a Communist I have no doubt it will be fulfilled but I know that such an assertion is not sufficient for many. Let me advance two arguments. In 1956, I attended the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union when it was planned to reduce the working day to 7 hours and to introduce 6 hours of work on Saturday so that people would have a little more time

for the week end. In 1959, again I was in the Soviet Union and this decision had been largely implemented. That is a matter of simple visual observation and I doubt if anyone seriously challenges it. The other argument is that *all* past Soviet proposals have always been fulfilled. From that it can readily be deduced that this one will too.

No struggle against a hostile employer is needed: no Arbitration Court, but simply the work and decisions of the Soviet people.

HIGHER WAGES

Simultaneously with this will go an increase of real wages by 40% — in terms of a comparable Australian worker on, say a wage of £15 a week now, he could say with complete confidence that in 1965 his wages will have risen to the equivalent of £21 a week.

Additionally he would look forward to a great increase in all forms of social service and culture — many more avenues for leisure, more libraries, playing fields, extension of education, improvement of the already splendid medical service.

And on top of all this there is a manpower shortage in the Soviet Union!

FURTHER PRODUCTION INCREASE

By 1965 overall industrial output is to rise 80% over the 1958 level. That is a really colossal increase when you consider the already huge industrial production of the Soviet Union—the greatest in Europe. It is certain that this target will be more than reached. Agricultural output is to rise by 70% by 1965 — another colossal increase. The Soviet people are able to sit down and plan all this precisely because they are dealing with a socialist economy. But what is the present position in Australia? Is it possible even to think in terms of the Australian people planning to increase overall industrial output or agricultural output at all? No it is not, because production is in the hands of private monopolies which produce if they can do so profitably and don't produce if they can't. Take the single Australian example of steel — the Australian people have no say whatever in how much steel is produced in Australia: that is completely in the hands of the B.H.P. And you can take any other commodity and apply the same test. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union the increase in steel production is planned and planned to blend harmoniously with all other aspects of

production and the determining factor in the planning is the satisfaction of the needs of the Soviet people.

No one has the fear of unemployment hanging over him; everyone is guaranteed the right to work. If you wanted work it would be impossible to be without it in the Soviet Union.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS

Just to illustrate the great plans and great achievements of the Soviet Union let me summarise a few highlights. In the Soviet Union every eight hours a new factory comes into operation. In the 7-year period covered by the plan discussed at the 21st Congress, 15,000,000 flats will be built and that is the equivalent of two Parises and two Londons taken together. Anyone who has been in Moscow will not doubt this for a moment for in Moscow there is a sea of building cranes working all the time. In 1956, I was greatly impressed by this but in 1959 even more. For example, from the Moscow aerodrome is a fairly long drive to Moscow. I drove it in 1956 — there were old houses and a lot of empty land along the way. In 1959, many of the old houses had disappeared to be replaced by great new modern settlements — huge blocks of flats with every modern amenity and complete with shops. Nor is that all. During my stay in Moscow I travelled to the town of Dubna where there is a huge nuclear research station. On the way, our car was held up by a train crossing the road. It was a train at least a mile long laden with building material for the construction of a complete satellite town about 40 miles from Moscow. Everywhere motor trucks (all Soviet made) are to be seen carrying not only building materials but materials of all kinds. To return to the flats — every day in the Soviet Union 3,000 families receive the key to a new flat. The Soviet Union's difficult housing situation is rapidly being solved.

I was in several Moscow flats. They are of the highest standard, spacious, well built and at a rent of 4-5% of the occupier's income and that 4-5% includes payment for all services: gas, electricity, water, etc. So if your income in Australia were £700 a year you would pay about £28 a year in rent or just over 10/- a week. We Australians pay an average of about one-third of an average weekly wage for rent plus electricity, gas and so on, but today about two-thirds of Australians are buying their own home and paying very big weekly instalments plus insurance, rates and taxes and in addition of course also pay for gas, electricity and other such services.

The services supplied to the flats are of the best. In many places in Sydney and Melbourne the gas pressure in the gas stoves is very poor and the gas is expensive, but in Moscow the pressure is excellent, the gas of best quality and as pointed out above its cost is included in the rent. Other services are on a par.

If you want to own a house you can do so and it is very cheap. This mainly applies in the farming districts.

Another commentary on all this is the close attention given by Soviet leaders to solving the housing problem. At the 21st Congress, N. S. Khrushchev discussed in considerable detail the most effective methods of building and discussed them with obvious mastery of his subject. He devoted some time to demonstrating the great advantages of mass prefabrication of buildings including prefabrication of their ceilings and roofs. So effective are these methods that in a matter of weeks in Moscow I saw a big block of flats rise from next to nothing to near completion. And that is not exceptional.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Or take an example from another sphere of Soviet life. In the Soviet Union at this moment, 55,000,000 people are studying. And there are all the facilities for them to do so at no cost. There is one library for every 5,000 people. The average size of the libraries is 20-25,000 books. Wherever you go in the Soviet Union, to factory, farm or school you find a library and a library full of the best books of all countries. In the hospitals and sanatoria, you will find quite extensive libraries. While of course the vast majority of books are in Russian you will find in most of these libraries a small section in foreign languages, particularly English, German and French, to cater for Russian students of these languages, of whom there are many. In 1958, the Soviet Union published 1,000,000,000 books — a truly staggering number. Books are literally snatched up from the bookstores. An edition sells out in no time. Australian authors such as Katharine Susannah Prichard, Alan Marshall, Frank Hardy have been translated into Russian and the political writings of e.g., L. L. Sharkey likewise. Or take the growth of television. In 1953, there were 3 TV stations; in 1958, there were 53 stations. These are only some examples of the way in which the Soviet people cater for their own requirements.

INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Let us look at a few industrial and agricultural examples. Every three days in the Soviet Union the output of electrical power exceeds the *annual* output in Czarist times — a short 41 years ago. The industrial output of the Soviet Union increases at the rate of 10-11% per annum—the comparable figure for the U.S. is 2-3%. Uzbekistan was a former backward oppressed part of old Russia. Under the 7-year plan agreed upon at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by 1965 the cotton production of Uzbekistan alone will be more than the total of that of the traditional cotton growers of Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and India and it will be only 60% of total Soviet production. Or in Kazakhstan, another former backward and oppressed part of old Czarist Russia, total production exceeds that of Pakistan — a country under so-called Western influence and with a population far in excess of Kazakhstan.

PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

The Soviet people set themselves the objective of surpassing the per head output of the most advanced capitalist country, i.e., the United States. At the moment, Soviet per head industrial production is half that of U.S. while in agriculture it is some 20-25% below. The Soviet Communist Party made no attempt to conceal this but on the contrary frankly revealed it, for complete honesty and Communism are synonymous. Per head production is the ultimate test of capacity to produce an abundance for all, so that everyone can help himself to just what he needs. It is a measure too of the degree of mechanisation, rationalisation and automation of industry, a measure of the technical progress of industry. As we pointed out before, the rate of growth in the Soviet Union exceeds that of U.S. five times over, but it will be after the 7-year plan that the objective of surpassing the U.S. in per head production is realised. That is so much for U.S. production. Now let us look at it another way. Soviet per head production is well in excess of per capita production of the world taken as a whole. The Soviet Union is the first in Europe in total output. All this too is achieved with the lowest industrial accident rate in the world and with diminishing hours of work, increasing pay and ever improving social services.

We have said that agricultural production is to rise by 70% in the seven years 1959-65. And here another problem of interest to all Communists and to many others, arises.

One of the aims of Communism has been to abolish the difference between town and country. How far has this progressed in the Soviet Union? It has progressed a long way with the extensive electrification of the farms (soon to be completed) and the vast mechanisation of agriculture to such an extent that it was said by M. Suslov at the Congress that rural labour is more and more approximating industrial labour.

The expansion of education services, health services, culture of every kind in the rural areas and the joint building by collective farms of processing plants, irrigation schemes, power plants are all headed in the direction of bridging the gap between town and country and of developing collective farm property into public property.

There is in the Soviet Union quite a movement to surrender the private plots in the collective farms into the collective because with the high level of collective farm production it is now much more profitable to put it into the collective farm. What is happening is that all streams — agricultural and industrial — are leading to Communism. The abundance of agricultural products is demonstrated by the fact that the Soviet Union is now first in the world in absolute volume of production of milk and butter and soon will be first in per head production of these things.

STANDARDS OF LIVING

The Soviet Communist Party says that when all its plans are fulfilled the Soviet people will have the highest standard of living in the world. But maybe this is a little too modest because in speaking of the standard of living in a balanced way many things have to be taken into account. We may start off by saying that N. S. Khrushchev pointed out both at the 20th Congress and at the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, that there were workers in the Soviet Union who received low pay. Again it was a matter of complete honesty and he said that those workers must have their pay increased. In passing, it is hard to imagine the Prime Minister of Australia making any such statement, let alone talk about ways and means of improving the wages. But by and large the average pay of the Soviet worker gives him reasonable comfort. There are many things he receives in addition to his pay. It is with those that it is necessary to be concerned for a moment for they vitally affect the standard of living.

SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT

The first worthy of mention is his complete security of employment. There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union: indeed, as pointed out before, there is a shortage of labour. Rather a contrast with the Australian position. In New South Wales, thousands of miners have become "redundant" in recent years. Think of what a tremendous material and moral asset is security of employment. The Soviet worker's income is guaranteed: he is free from the worry of ever being without a job. In our country no one's job is secure in that sense: almost all workers have an uncertainty about their job, some more than others. You know what a toll that worry about continuity of employment takes—it saps the health and strength of many a man. In fact, for some years in Australia there was virtually no unemployment but today there are many unemployed and many on part-time work and at no time — even in the employment peak — has there been an iron clad guarantee of employment. Under the Soviet constitution, every Soviet citizen is guaranteed the right to work — really the most basic of all rights, for freedom to say and print and do what you like is not of much use to the starving man. But what does this right mean?

It means that every man and woman in the Soviet Union can work if he or she wants to. It is true that in Australia many husbands and wives have worked over the past years, but at no time did they have the *guarantee* of work. And in the Soviet Union everything is done to make this right real. In the case of the woman there are creches and kindergartens for the children, shops close at hand and worked by a shift staff so that they are always available, prepared meals can be bought, there are extensive dining room facilities. She is given most generous leave and assistance throughout pregnancy, the birth of her children and their post natal care. There is no discrimination against her in pay or in any other way. So that in any Soviet family unit husband, wife and any adult children are guaranteed the right to work. Think of that too in terms of security and peace of mind: no tortured wonderings of how long the job will last, of how to meet the rent or the hire purchase commitments, no need to argue about equal pay for equal work or to fear the economic consequences of childbirth to name but a few aspects of it.

RENT

Nor from the weekly pay is there to be deducted as a first charge a big sum to meet the rent or purchase instalment on the house — it is that mere 4.5% about which we spoke earlier.

FREE MEDICAL SERVICES

If the Soviet citizen gets sick he has an entirely free non-contributory and most extensive and complete hospital and medical service and he gets paid while he is ill. If he feels ill he is not beset with fear of losing his job or of how he will meet huge hospital or medical expenses: he knows in advance that there will be no such expenses. In Australia, it is very difficult to get into a hospital for medical treatment and having got there it is very easy to get out. Doctors and nurses do a remarkably good job but the pressure on the hospitals is enormous and patients are turned over as rapidly as possible. In the Soviet Union, if you need hospital treatment you get into hospital without any trouble at all and having got in you remain there until your treatment is finished: indeed it is difficult to get out so anxious are the Soviet doctors to ensure that you are cured. I myself experienced three weeks in a Moscow hospital. I estimate that comparable hospital and medical treatment in an Australian hospital would have cost up to £150. An Australian friend spent 2½ months in the same hospital and another 2½ months in a Soviet sanatorium. The cost of that in Australia would be prohibitive. But it cost neither of us a penny. Oh! some people would say — the Soviet Union would take special care of foreigners and particularly of Communists. Yes, it is true that the Soviet Union (in our cases the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) shows a remarkable solicitude for its guests. But the fact remains that the vast majority of patients in this hospital were Soviet citizens: some of them felt their diseases to be cured and were impatient to leave the hospital, but they could not because the doctors were not satisfied that they had had enough treatment. *And while they were there their pay went on.* What a tremendous comfort—no fear of each day meaning more expense, more loss of wages! And with it all a guarantee that at the end of their treatment they go back to their job! At the 21st Congress, N. S. Khrushchev spoke about this matter. He took the case of an American who underwent an operation for stomach ulcers. He took the particulars from the American magazine U.S. News and World Report. The magazine says: "the cost of surgical treatment for stomach ulcers runs up to \$1,264.50 of which \$325.50 is the charge for staying in hospital for 21 days, \$500 is paid for the operation, \$75 for the use of the operating room, \$3 for staying in the convalescence ward, \$78.60 for treatment, \$21.50 for oxygen, \$56.30 for bandages, \$99 for laboratory services, \$50 for anaesthesia, \$55 for x-ray examinations." That is a not

unfamiliar picture to an Australian. And the Australian worker has the problem of his whole family: for any worker or a member of his family to fall sick is an absolute disaster. It should also be said that in the Soviet Union there is an abundance of doctors (easily the highest ratio in the world), nurses, polyclinics, hospitals and sanatoria. Factories, farms, schools have their own doctors and nurses who can give immediate medical attention where needed.

INDUSTRIAL INJURIES

In Australia, I have seen many workers' compensation cases and the intense and continuous struggle by injured workers against their employers or their employers' insurance company (often, of course, the same people simply following a different line of business). Early in my life it sometimes amazed me that a gigantic employer or insurance company would haggle over a few shillings and fight like a demon over any substantial claim and stoop to the lowest of tricks to defeat a worker's compensation claim. It still happens just the same but it has ceased to amaze me because it is the way capitalism works. I happened to be present in a Moscow People's Court when just such a matter arose and I followed it with great interest. A worker appeared—he did not need any lawyer—told the Court he had been a carpenter employed in a Moscow factory and there he had suffered an injury to his right hand so that he could no longer follow his trade, he had got a job at another place but his wages were about one-third less than he was getting at the place where he had the accident. The Chairman of the Court (it was composed of a Chairman who is usually a trained lawyer but elected to his position, and two lay assessors also elected) asked a woman who represented the enterprise where the worker had been injured, what the attitude of that enterprise was. She merely said they agreed fully with what the worker had said and were prepared to make up his wages to the full amount that he had earned there. Thereupon the Court made an order to that effect. I enquired if that always happened and was told that it did: that this was just routine. Then I asked, well why go to the Court at all, and was told it was merely to provide a permanent record so that if the man went anywhere else he could always refer to the Court order.

To those used to the argument over whether there is any injury at all, or if so the constant attempt of the employer to minimise it, this is a real eye opener. Is it not very relevant to any consideration of the standard of living?

Rents have already been mentioned in another connection. 4-5% including all services has a great deal to do with the standard of living.

CHEAP TRANSPORT

Or look at the cost of transport. Every worker in any Australian city knows of the bad and very costly transport system, taking as it does each week quite a sizeable sum from the pay for the right to travel in an overcrowded train, bus or tram. Everyone knows of the constantly increasing fares and the constantly decreasing service. Everyone complains about it. But in the Moscow metro (underground), you can go anywhere in Moscow for 50 kopeks (next to nothing) and you go on a most beautiful (literally beautiful) system — splendid stations, spotlessly clean, with magnificent ventilation and spotlessly clean and fast trains every 1½-2 minutes. I have travelled on the London underground which provides a pretty good service, but it just can't compare with the Moscow underground. And other Soviet transport facilities are on a par. In some cases, special transport to enterprises is provided. The 7 year plan provides for improvements in the transport system. Does this not have a big bearing on standards of living?

PENSIONERS

Today in Australia the terrible lot of pensioners is only too well known. But nothing is done to alleviate it. In the Soviet Union, the worker is entitled to a pension of between 50% and 100% of his wages and of course he has the rent, medical treatment, transport facilities and so on just mentioned.

Basic foodstuffs are extremely cheap and their price goes down. Price increases are unknown.

TAXATION

Taxes are almost non-existent and amount at most to less than 8% of the budget. By decision of the 21st Congress, they will be entirely abolished within the period of the 7-year plan, i.e., 1959-65. Yet in our country, it has been estimated that taxes take up to £10 a week of the Australian workers' income. (On February 7, 1959, the Sydney Morning Herald quoted Mr. J. McKellar White, secretary of the Taxpayers' Association of N.S.W., as saying: ". . . An average family man with wife and two children now contributes more than £10 a week in various forms of taxation.")

Education is entirely free.

All of this goes to show that the standard of living in the Soviet Union has many components that do not exist at all in the capitalist countries. It is safe to conclude that it is far higher than the world average and from many points of view higher than the standard of living of the skilled workers in the most advanced capitalist countries. The direction of the Soviet living standard is continually upward but the direction of living standards in capitalist countries tends to be continually downward.

After telling an Australian worker all this I was asked was there one private motor car to every four persons in the Soviet Union (this is about the Australian figure). I said no, there was not and he said, that shows that the standard of living is not as high there as here. But the question is, is the criterion of the standard of living the number of motor cars in the community? Apart from the fact that many of the motor cars in Australia are purchased on the hire purchase system, is not the very high proportion of cars evidence of the irrational production under capitalism? Many basic problems remain unsolved while all this energy, work and material resources are going into the production of motor cars. The public transport system goes to rack and ruin, the housing problem goes unsolved, there is a desperate crisis in education, a sizeable number of people are unemployed.

The attitude of Australian monopolies and the Australian government was put in all its crudeness by Sir Arthur Warner, head of a huge monopoly firm and simultaneously a senior Minister in the government of the State of Victoria. "The essence of the situation is that the people, through the ballot box and by their purchasing, indicate that they prefer cars, TV sets and radio to, say more sewerage and hospitals." (Melbourne Herald May 2, 1959). The life work of such a person as Sir Arthur Warner, and he is typical of all monopolists, is to sell the products of monopoly at a profit and through the governments they control, to put sewerage and hospitals into a secondary position. In a sensible society, first things would come first—the basic requirements of the people would be first solved. That precisely has been the plan of the Soviet Union and remains their plan. But as a matter of interest, at the end of the current 7-year plan, i.e., in 1965, the Soviet Union will produce two cars every minute. There is no doubt that the Soviet people will have motor cars and it will be as part of a general all-round advancement.

FRATERNAL AID

Nor have the Soviet people been at all selfish in their development. They have extended a helping hand to many other countries. In Poland, for example, to name only a little of the Soviet aid, I saw a giant steel mill near Cracow that was built with Soviet assistance and Soviet machinery; the great automobile works in Warsaw operates largely with Soviet machinery and turns out a car of Soviet design, and in the centre of Warsaw is the Palace of Culture wholly created and donated by the Soviet Union. It is a magnificent multi-storey building which contains libraries, sports facilities, indeed recreational facilities of every kind, and the most magnificent meeting hall I have ever seen. This accommodates 3,500 people — is built like an amphitheatre and has every modern appointment. Each seat is supplied with headphones and at the 3rd Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party which I attended as fraternal delegate from the Communist Party of Australia, the seats of the many fraternal delegates were equipped with earphones over which at the turn of a switch you could hear the then current speech translated into English, German, French, Italian, Spanish or Russian. And it is a truly magnificent hall in which to speak — its acoustics are remarkably good. In China, there has been tremendous Soviet assistance. Even while the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was in session, Chou-en-lai, leader of the fraternal delegation from the Communist Party of China and China's Premier signed an agreement with the Soviet Union under which the Soviet Union would build 78 major industrial enterprises in China. But you have only to look around China a little to see the magnificent assistance rendered by the Soviet Union. And these are only examples.

Nor is this assistance confined to the socialist countries. The Soviet Union has just completed the construction of a steel works in India the output of which exceeds all the total previous Indian production of steel. In the United Arab Republic the Soviet Union plays a major part in the construction of the Aswan dam. And they also are but two examples.

PEACE OR WAR

And then it is said the Soviet Union wants war. The daily press would have you believe that the Soviet Union threatens peace. But to want war is utterly inconsistent with all this peaceful construction. Hitler, when he planned war, burned

books: the Soviet Union prints them—many of them anti-war books—no pro-war books—and prints them in thousands of millions of copies. The Soviet people do not build gigantic blocks of flats only to see them destroyed in war, nor the new factories (one of which comes into commission every 8 hours as pointed out above) nor the gigantic hydro-electric and thermal power stations planned in the 7-year plan (e.g. Bratsk hydro-electric station with an output of 3,600,000 kilowatts, Krasnoyarsk 4,200,000 to name only two of very many. Australia's total output is between 4 and 5 million). The Soviet Party Congress literally rang with the passionate call for peace—no passive pleading for peace, but a determined, militant call to curb any force that threatened war. No guns before butter policy, but the very reverse—plans to shorten hours, increase wages, increase industrial output and a determination to defend all their gains.

EDUCATION — PHYSICAL AND MENTAL

The Soviet Union has produced a new society—a new man—a man who is utterly opposed to war. The characteristic Soviet citizen is well educated — educated in an all-round way — educated in literature, science and mathematics, languages and similar aspects of education but educated too in physical work. His education has been directly linked with industrial production or if he is trained for industry his education is all-sided. The Party Congress discussed ways and means to strengthen this link — to abolish the difference between physical and mental labour. Everyone who thinks about this matter knows that in our society there is a vast cleavage between physical and mental labour. It is socially advantageous to be educated mentally — the Universities of our country completely separate the two. The great majority of Australians get a certain minimum of education — sufficient to enable them to work in factories for the profit of a handful of private factory owners. Each group — those who work physically and those who work mentally — suffers from the abnormal separation of the two. There is a certain warping of each. Man, however, is an all-round being. To live fully he must be fully equipped, mentally and physically — participation in productive labour is as essential as participation in mental labour. If you look at the main report given to the Soviet Party Congress by N. S. Khrushchev you will see just how carefully the Soviet Union plans to bring even closer these two aspects of education. Khrushchev took as a guiding principle a statement made by Lenin “. . . it is impossible to conceive of the ideal future society without the younger generation combining schooling with productive work:

neither schooling and upbringing without productive work, nor productive work without parallel schooling and upbringing could be raised to the heights demanded by the present state of technology and scientific knowledge."

What more noble sentiments could there be than what was said by N. S. Khrushchev: ". . . as socialist production is extended on a new material and technical basis, and as education is more closely linked with productive labour, the essential distinction between mental and physical labour will gradually disappear. The all-round development of our people will transform labour into man's prime want. This will be facilitated by the forthcoming reduction of working hours and further improvement of working conditions. When every branch of industry is automated, when man becomes the master of the machine, he will have to devote less time and energy to producing the things he needs. Labour, which at times is still arduous and tiring, will become a source of joy and pleasure for a harmoniously developed healthy person."

TRAVEL

To those who speak of iron curtains, allegedly erected by the Soviet Union, it may be of interest to know that in 1958, 1,500,000 Soviet citizens visited 64 foreign countries and 500,000 foreigners visited the Soviet Union.

By 1941, the Soviet Union had already made great strides in bringing up a new man free from much of the warping of capitalism. But the Hitler invasion caused the loss of over 11,000,000 Soviet citizens — undoubtedly the most grievous of all losses. There is scarcely a family in the Soviet Union that escaped the loss of one or more of its members. A people that has created a new man like this and then suffered like this, does not look for war.

PEACE WITH GERMANY

Again one of the central themes in the consideration of international politics at this Congress was the problem of a peace treaty with Germany. To us in Australia Germany may seem far away. But to the Soviet people who suffered so seriously, and to the people of Europe such as the people of Czechoslovakia and Poland, the problem of Germany is indeed a real one. I had the experience of seeing the German concentration camp at Auschwitz, near Cracow, in Poland. There 4,000,000 people, men, women and children, were put to death. You may see a

huge stack of human hair, the pitiful remains of children's clothes and shoes, suitcases and other personal belongings of the victims as they were found when the Soviet Army captured the camp. And you may see the ovens where people were burned, the electrically-charged fences and other grim reminders of Nazi terror. People who have experienced this are indeed concerned to put an end to any further threats from a revived German militarism. Foreign Minister Gromyko who was a delegate to the Congress and sat in the same row as the Australian delegation, spoke strongly about the German question as, of course, did Khrushchev and others. Gromyko said if socialism achieved nothing else than peace it would cause a dirge by the reaction and a hymn by the ordinary people. Consistently and staunchly the Soviet Union has offered the Western Powers a Pact of Non-Aggression but it has been rejected. The Soviet Union supported the Polish plan for a de-nuclearised zone in Europe. It was rejected by the Western Powers. He said the Soviet Union opposes the re-arming of West Germany because that opposition is in the interests of peace. The atomic re-arming of Germany is the path to war and there must be a peace treaty with Germany. He asked the commonsense question: if they don't want war why don't they sign a peace treaty. The Western Powers are deluded by the idea of controlling Germany but experience shows it is hard to make a wolf into a vegetarian. The line of the ruling class is that it is better to be atomised than Communised, but the Soviet Union's proposals for a peace treaty with the two Germanys and the establishment of West Berlin as a free demilitarised city and withdrawal of foreign troops will meet with the support of all peace loving people. The threats of U.S. generals will certainly not frighten the Soviet Union but may well frighten some of their allies.

AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Or if you take the problem of outlawing nuclear weapons and immediately and unequivocally ending all nuclear tests you will find it occupied a central place in the discussion at the Soviet Party Congress. The Soviet Union is, as it were, in the box seat on this matter for, as pointed out by Khrushchev and by Malinovsky, Minister for Defence, the Soviet Union alone possesses the inter-continental ballistic missile which equipped with a nuclear warhead, can be delivered with "pin point accuracy" to any part of the globe. And Khrushchev pointed out that the inter-continental ballistic missile was now in serial production in the Soviet Union. Yet the Soviet Union proposed an un-

equivocal ban on all such weapons and the complete cessation of all nuclear bomb testing and indeed as is well known and was reported upon at the Congress itself, unilaterally suspended tests. Only when the U.S. and British governments continued testing, did the Soviet Union resume tests. What could be more commonsense than the speech of Khrushchev ". . . today when we lead in rocket engineering, we again say to the United States, Britain and France: let's ban for all time the testing, production and use of nuclear hydrogen and rocket weapons; let's destroy all stockpiles of these lethal weapons, let's use this supreme discovery of human genius exclusively for peaceful purposes, for the common good. Our government is ready to sign an appropriate agreement at any time." (p. 99.)

Of particular interest to Australians was the Congress proposal put in this way: a zone of peace, above all an atom free zone, can and must be created in the Far East and the entire Pacific Ocean area.

So the practical requirements of the Soviet Union are all against war — its great construction programme requires peace.

FOUNDATIONS OF PEACE POLICY

And all that flows from something much deeper and that is the social system of socialism — where all the factories, mines, farms are owned by the Soviet people themselves. Not a single capitalist or landlord exists to employ others and to make profit from their employment. There is no private profit motive to compel groups of monopolies in the Soviet Union to seek new markets or cheaper sources of raw materials. You do not find Soviet troops in Malaya, Cyprus, Algeria, Taiwan or the Philippines or anywhere else as you do the troops of Britain, Australia, France and the U.S. Imperialism is a world expansionist system — it must expand: it must get rid of its goods and at a profit: it is impelled to struggle hard to maintain its position and to compete bitterly with its rivals and the final determinant is military power. But socialism in the Soviet Union exploits nobody: its production is planned to satisfy the needs of the Soviet people: it plans its production to do that. Its 7-year plan adopted at the 21st Congress did just that. It sought out weaknesses and sought to make even more rational use of the resources of the Soviet Union. One example was provided by the careful planning of more extensive use of oil and natural gas as fuel — a source hitherto largely untapped and a very cheap fuel. "The share of oil and gas in the total output of fuel will grow from

31 to 51% while that of coal will correspondingly shrink from 60 to 43%, but nonetheless output of coal will rise in the 7-year period by 21-23% as against the present level." When all the people own all the resources such planning can go on: the whole resources can be reviewed as indeed they were and can be put to the most rational use.

War arises from the struggle of the giant monopolies of the world to intensify exploitation for new markets to sell their products at a profit. But none of that exists in the Soviet Union. Furthermore the great capitalists see the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as a market and source of exploitation that has been lost to them. They never lose hope of getting it back. Again they see this new planned system of society satisfying the wants of its people as a terrible threat by its mere example to their very existence. So every day there appears a fire-eating threat against the Soviet Union from some or other American politician, admiral or general, whereas you never find any such threats by Soviet leaders against any other country.

THE WORLD SOCIALIST SYSTEM

At the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the simultaneous advance of all the socialist countries was remarked upon and analysed. The Soviet Union does not advance at the expense of any other socialist (or indeed, any) country. In 1958, industrial output in the socialist countries was five times that of 1937. Through 1950-1958 the Chinese People's Republic raised its industrial output approximately ten-fold. Compared with pre-war, industrial production in 1958 increased more than 450 per cent in Poland, 230 per cent in Czechoslovakia, more than 150 per cent in the German Democratic Republic, nearly 300 per cent in Rumania, over 300 per cent in Hungary, about 800 per cent in Bulgaria and 1,700 per cent in Albania. The industrial output of the Korean People's Democratic Republic increased 3.5 fold over 1949. This was said with joy. Can you imagine a U.S. or British or Australian politician rejoicing over the successes of the other. I have already commented on the assistance given to these socialist countries by the Soviet Union much of which I have seen with my own eyes. In passing, whoever heard of an imperialist country working or assisting to create heavy industry — the root of national independence — in another country. Think of the extremely backward industrial position in which the British

imperialists kept India or any other British colony or think of the terrible backwardness imposed upon China by the imperialists. Australia's own development as a nation has been largely a history of the Australian capitalists creating a native industry and insisting, true, with the assistance of the common people, on more and more independence from Great Britain. But in the socialist countries there are fraternal relations of mutual help— one does not advance at the expense of another. In the world of capitalism France, Britain and the U.S. advanced as great industrial powers — they did so at the expense of the others, sometimes by war, and all the time at the expense of the peoples of Asia, Africa, South America. Uneven development is a law of capitalism — one develops at the expense of others — each development produces new antagonisms. In the socialist countries there is a growing co-ordination of economies — one assists the other so that simultaneously there is great progress.

WARM FRATERNITY

At the Congress, representatives from the Communist Parties of the socialist countries all spoke. One and all they testified to the solidarity of the socialist countries, to the great assistance rendered by the Soviet Union, the first socialist country. You could feel the strength and warmth of their greetings to the Soviet Party: the strength and unity of these peoples. Incidentally at the end of the Soviet 7-year plan Soviet production plus that of the ever developing socialist countries will account for more than half the world industrial output. That is indeed a gigantic development from backward Czarist Russia, Poland, China and so on.

And while on the subject, representatives from the Communist Parties in most of the other countries of the world spoke. They all testified to the heartfelt desire and determination of the people to be rid of the capitalist system with its war, poverty, exploitation and degradation of mankind. From every part of the world you got a picture of rising struggle, of determination to end this social system and follow the splendid example of the peoples who have embarked upon socialism.

A spirit of real friendship and international solidarity prevailed throughout the Congress. Here, too, all the speeches were simultaneously translated into English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Chinese and for those who did not speak these languages a special earphone was provided to give a translation in a particular language. At the close of the Congress, the Soviet

Party gave a banquet to the fraternal delegates from other Parties. Members and alternate members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union met with all the fraternal delegates in an atmosphere of cordiality — exchanged experiences — had a few words with Soviet leaders. Such an experience of fraternal solidarity throughout the Congress is an expression of the growing strength of the world Communist movement.

NO DIVISIONS

There are those who say there are divisions in the world communist movement, that China is at loggerheads with the Soviet Union, that there is this and that conflict between various Communist Parties, that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union dominates the other Parties. This sort of thing is assiduously fostered particularly by the Yugoslav League of Communists. But it is utter nonsense. It was repudiated at the 21st Congress, but to me as a participant in the Congress, it was obviously untrue. You could not attend such a gathering without feeling a sense of strength in the really fraternal feelings between the Parties. I had many exchanges of opinion with many people from different countries and, of course, there was complete basic agreement amongst us for we start from a common scientific analysis of society — Marxism-Leninism.

Because there are differences in conditions in different countries, differences of emphasis incidentally arise but the fact is they are incidental to the fundamental unity around the main lines of struggle — for peace, democracy, socialism. It is in the exchange of opinion in free discussion that greater unity and clarity are achieved. In 1956, I attended the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and there I felt the same thing, but three years later at the 21st Congress I felt an even further development of it. After the 21st Congress, I attended the 3rd Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party and then the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Each of them was attended by delegations from Communist Parties in other countries. At each of them this spirit of internationalism was also strong.

There is no domination of one party by another. Khrushchev said, and it is profoundly true: "It is precisely because all the parties have equal rights that they maintain relations of confidence and voluntary co-operation, that they voluntarily and consciously seek joint action as component elements of a single great army of labour."

The Yugoslav League of Communists have attempted to create trouble on many fronts of the Communist struggle. Their efforts are really the attempt to do from within what the imperialists have failed to do from without, i.e., break up the Communist Parties, disarm them, render them harmless to capitalism. Under the guise of defending Communism, they attack its basic principles.

WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE

And while speaking of the Yugoslav League of Communists another matter of great interest to Communists is "the withering away of the State." Marx, Engels and Lenin pointed out that the State, i.e., Parliament, the Law Courts, the Army, the gaols, the police force and so on, was the instrument of the exploiting class to keep in subjection the exploited class. In the Soviet Union, the State is the instrument of the working class — the working people. Its functions of repressing the minority exploiting class in Russia have disappeared because there is now no exploiting class. The Yugoslav revisionists demand that the State in the Soviet Union should wither away. But to demand that the Soviet Army be disbanded: that the State should cease to discharge its defence obligations, is to demand that the Soviet Union be handed over lock, stock and barrel to the U.S. imperialists. At the very moment when the U.S. intensifies spying and plotting against the Soviet Union and socialist countries, of course, the security services of the Soviet Union should be strengthened against this sort of thing. Of course, too, the State has a great role to play in organising the 7-year plan into life.

But the State in the Soviet Union is undergoing great changes. Many of its functions have been changed or are in the process of being handed over to public bodies. There are no persons in gaol for political offences. The size of the militia (the police force) has been drastically reduced. To take another sphere, hitherto the sports movement was supervised by a government agency. Now it will be conducted by a Union of Voluntary Sports' Societies — a non-government body. Much of the maintenance of public order is on a voluntary basis — conducted by public organisation. Voluntary Courts of Honor — no part of the State apparatus — exercise a persuasive influence on citizens who deviate from the standards of good conduct. The Young Communist League plays a big part in promoting good behaviour by young people.

INTERNAL SECURITY

The Chairman of the State Security Council spoke to the Congress. He said that the U.S. spends 1½ billion dollars on intelligence and employs over 20,000 agents (the Melbourne "Herald" on May 5, 1959 gave the figure of 25,000). Much of this is directed against the Soviet Union. The job of the Security Service in the Soviet Union is to "cut short their activities in our country" and that was being done. This State organ would be ruthless to the enemies of the Soviet people but to the people themselves quite different — full of solicitude and understanding. Every Soviet citizen can rest assured there will be no violations of legality. Crime is diminishing. Preventive measures were necessary with young people who stray — some Soviet people think of them as though they were criminals but the authorities know it is necessary to be very careful — to use methods of persuasion — to convince them — punishment makes them bitter and also makes their relatives bitter. Consideration is being given to giving the Young Communist League authority to deal with petty crimes. What more humane approach could there be than this?

Yes, in every way except the detection of foreign agents — the punitive powers of the Soviet State are diminishing because that accords with the reality of Soviet society.

DEMOCRACY

There is an ever-widening democracy — people's participation in government and in discussions. The very discussion for the Congress is proof enough of that. The Soviet people through the Congress of their Communist Party were planning their economy and their lives for the ensuing 7 years. They held over 968,000 meetings attended by over 70,000,000 people to discuss the plans. Nearly 5,000,000 people spoke at them. And that is not to speak of newspaper and magazine articles, wall newspapers and countless other means of discussion.

Contrast this great nationwide discussion with what goes on in the capitalist countries — with what goes on with the political parties of capitalism. These parties come forward only at election times to tell you anything of their policy. Even then they never discuss the matters that really concern the people. Think of the apathy, indifference and cynicism that exists in the community about them. But here at this Soviet Party Congress and the people's discussion about it, every aspect of Soviet life was subject to the scrutiny of the people for they were dealing

with their own lives, with their own destiny. They are indeed the captains of their own souls, the masters of their fates. They analysed all aspects of industry and agriculture—discussed the cheapest and most efficient way of going about things. The Congress, and the Soviet people, presented a magnificent picture of ordinary people working out the whole economy; and I must make the contrast again with capitalism where what happens is so largely beyond the control of the people.

The Congress itself was the crystallisation of this discussion. People from every walk of life spoke. Collective farmers, dairymaids, steel workers, coal miners, scientists, writers, poets, seamen, party leaders. Through them you could feel the heart of the Soviet people beating. They spoke of their work, of their achievements and of what they would achieve. Many of them reported that in the few short weeks of the 7-year plan that had passed before the Congress met, already the proportionate target figure of the plan had been surpassed. All of them said the ultimate target would be overfulfilled. There was plenty of frank speaking, criticism of shortcomings, but no carping criticism, no divisions but a supreme unity. There was a spirit of confidence, of modesty and determination. And after the Congress the delegates went away to report to the people on the Congress decisions. Another great round of discussion went on. In these meetings many of the fraternal delegates participated. The Soviet workers own their own factories and it is something of a novelty for someone from a capitalist country to speak to workers who own factories but it is a thrilling one. The spirit and enthusiasm of Soviet workers is something that has to be experienced. The Soviet newspapers published every word that was uttered at the Congress and the newspapers were avidly read by all Soviet citizens. This cross-section of people who spoke and the Soviet public were unanimous in their political attitude.

LEADERS OF A NEW TYPE

Another very impressive feature of the Congress was the obvious energy and ability of Khrushchev. The Soviet Union covers the largest land area of any country in the world. Of the 1,261 Congress delegates many of them came to Moscow from regions thousands of miles away — from near the Arctic circle, from Vladivostok, from Siberia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Estonia and so on—widely separated areas. But wherever they came from, these delegates almost invariably referred to a visit

or visits made to their centres by N. S. Khrushchev. On his visits he talked to workers of all kinds, shared their experiences, offered advice, accepted advice and suggestions; in other words, moved amongst the people as one of them. He spoke to miners, chemical workers, metal workers, farmers, dairymaids, scientists — everyone. In doing that he was giving a true example of how Communists work: they are one and the same as the people: have no interests other than the best interests of the people. That is the life of all Communists—to be with the people. Imagine Mr. Menzies, or indeed the leaders of the Labor Party, moving amongst the people in this way. Yes, they attend receptions or are present on ceremonial occasions, but very, very rarely do you find them moving amongst the people because capitalist society is entirely different.

CONCLUSION

It may be said that all that is written here is pro-Soviet. And I want to say immediately that that is so. As a Communist I believe the most patriotic duty of an Australian is to make Australia a country of socialism — to strive to give Australia too a planned economy. The great achievements of socialism in the Soviet Union are an inspiration to do that. All Communists—indeed all people — will watch with the greatest interest the unfolding of the Soviet 7-year plan. We Communists have no doubt whatever that it will be fulfilled and overfulfilled; its fulfilment will be still another powerful challenge to the whole social system of capitalism. It will put another weapon in the hands of the working class whose historic mission is to replace capitalism. We shall seek to popularise all these achievements in our fight to lead the people to put an end to capitalism. We fully share the view of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union when it said “. . . our seven-year plan is a powerful moral support for the international workers' and communist movement, for all democrats, in their struggle against reaction and imperialism. By making fresh progress in building communism, the Soviet people will be doing their international duty by the international working-class.”

In our turn we gather new strength, new vigour from the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the struggle for the immediate demands of the working people and in the struggle to end capitalism.

you cracked big stones into little ones for a penny a day, as distinct from the fourpence-a-day aristocrat who went out to a much easier job called "gardening". The jail in this late depression period was overcrowded with petty thieves and after a week in the cell and a few days' solitary confinement I found myself landed in a disused hospital ward in the company of 30 or more people. They were on the whole very ordinary and pleasant people. You could have one visit per month from relatives or friends, talking to them for five minutes through two rows of iron bars, with warders walking up and down hearing every word, and also one letter in and out each month. Exceptional care was taken to collect spoons, knives and forks after use, and the disappearance of one of these articles would cause a most intensive round up and search. On one such occasion when the prison was being turned upside down to find a missing fork, one wit—a Communist—called out "Good God! There must be a thief among us".

One morning I was called to the jail governor's room to meet two Labor M.L.A.'s, Jewell (Brunswick) and Keane (Coburg), who told me of the debate on the free speech issue in the State House and assured me I could expect to be released shortly. Soon afterwards all free speech sentences were remitted and I emerged into what seemed like another world.

THE DOLE STRIKES

It was July, and the dole strike was on—W. Kent Hughes, then Victorian Minister for Sustenance, had called up the unemployed to work for their dole for a number of hours each week needed to earn the princely sums of 8/- a week for single men, 12/- a week for married men and 1/- for each child. Some were called up to work on the Shrine of Remembrance grounds, some on the Yarra Boulevard. Many ex-servicemen were among those called up to beautify the Shrine that had been erected in their honor, and these ex-servicemen were to get the same pittance as anyone else. The winter was a very bitter one and the unemployed were already starving before they started their heroic strike which lasted eight weeks. Some very fine work was done

R Gibson, My Years in the CP

collecting relief. Demanding double pay, the men finally won increases to 20/- a week for a married man, and 12/- for a single person with 2/- for each child. At first our State Secretariat urged standing out for the double rates; but fortunately R. Dixon, then Assistant General Secretary of the Party, was over in Melbourne at this moment. He insisted on an immediate discussion with members in the different local unemployed organisations. Their report made it clear that the strike could not last another week and we therefore advised accepting the compromise as a basis from which to build up for a further advance in the future.

The second dole strike for higher rates came early in 1935 and was officially led by the Trades Hall Council and its Unemployed Committee, the Communists being part of this Committee. While this strike was proceeding the Argyle Government fell and gave place to the Dunstan Country Party Government, based on Labor Party support. Dunstan agreed to a settlement which raised the sustenance rates to 25/- a week for a married man, 16/- for a single person, and 3/- for each child—higher than the present rates of unemployment benefit if one takes into account cost of living changes. Jack Scullin, nephew of the ex-Prime Minister, was one of those who played an outstanding part in the leadership of the second dole strike.

One remarkable proof of the initiative of the unemployed these years was the setting up, and successful running over a long period, of the Unemployed Single Men's Groups. Taking over adjacent houses, or disused factory premises, groups of single unemployed men in at least four suburbs, Brunswick, Collingwood, Fitzroy and South Melbourne, pooled their dole allowances, set themselves up as a bargaining unit in dealing with shopkeepers, set up their elected committees and their own system of discipline, and for a while made their lot relatively tolerable.

In 1933 an eviction order was issued against the Fitzroy group and a large force of uniformed and plain-clothes police and mounted troopers arrived to carry it out. The men replied by carrying their furniture on a

long march through the streets and finally left it on the steps of Parliament House. On the way some of them had gone into St. Patrick's Cathedral grounds to get refuge from the police, only to find that the police paid no respect to any religious sanctuary. The upshot of this militant demonstration was that the eviction order was withdrawn and the Fitzroy U.S.M.G. carried on as before.

The Australian unemployed by their many and fearless struggles wrote a noble chapter in the history of the world working class. Their struggles were remarkable even by the standard of unemployed struggles in other lands during the same period. The 1933 dole strike, waged so solidly for eight weeks by large bodies of men who started with literally nothing, is surely an epic of working class heroism.

DEPRESSION YEARS SUMMED UP

Years later, giving evidence before Mr. Justice Lowe as Royal Commissioner on Communism, I quoted the struggles of the depression years as a final answer to those who allege that the Communists seek to worsen conditions in order that the workers may be more prepared to revolt against capitalism.

I said:—"The unemployed workers' movement, the Communist Party itself and the various unemployed committees that had been set up under the Party's leadership, led the unemployed in fighting their way out of the perfectly appalling conditions under which they were first sunk into conditions still bad but vastly better. This, I think is the most complete answer to anyone who claims that we want to see people despairing and destitute." Describing the conditions of the unemployed I said:—"If we wanted to see bad conditions we would have jumped for joy at conditions like these". Instead, "everything the unemployed won in those years they won by struggle, any every struggle they waged was led, or partly led, by the Communist Party."

After hearing our evidence and a much greater volume of evidence against us Mr. Justice Lowe in his report said in relation to actions by Communist-led

organisations:—"I think the proper conclusion from the evidence before me is that where strikes have occurred under Communist leadership or influence the purpose has been really, in the first place, to gain the advantages sought in the mens' demands. I think, however, that the leaders of the Communist Party at any rate have never lost sight of what they consider are the further advantages of giving training to the strikers in concerted actions against the employers and of striking a further blow at the capitalist system."

We support his verdict in both its parts. We seek better conditions and we seek the ending of the social system. In the course of the struggle for better conditions the workers are learning to organise, learning about capitalism, learning about the state, finding their leaders and in other ways preparing for the larger struggle to transform society.

In evidence at the Royal Commission hearing I also stated the attitude of Communists to free speech and other democratic rights. I said:—"We believe that important democratic rights have been won in the past, rights of assembly, organisation, press, speech. These rights have, in fact, been limited for the mass of the people. The rich have obviously a great advantage in getting printing presses, in getting halls and other means to realise their freedom. And these rights, such as they are, have had to be fought for. Today they have to be fought for more than ever. There is no road forward to socialism except through the winning of the right to organise, to speak, and to rally the people to socialism. Socialism demands the winning of the majority of the people. We agree with Lenin who said: "There is no road to socialism except the road through democracy, through political liberty."

A MEETING IN THE BUSH

Before proceeding may I recall one special incident in the free speech struggle? It occurred in 1932 in Yallourn. The local State Electricity Commission chief who has gone down in history as "Dictator Dixon" mustered what seemed to be nearly all the police in Gippsland to disperse a meeting which was to be