

The "Crisis" of Democracy

From Address given by J. A. Dawson to League for Freedom Forum, Sunday, April 6.

Democracy in Australia is subject to the present policy of Government—one in which the Chifley Labor Administration has the full support of the Menzies Liberal Party.

That policy is:—

To prepare for the next war—for Australia to actively participate in the World Struggle of Capital for Absolute Power—for the greater enslavement of the world's workers.

And that implies a low wage rate and a huge surplus production sufficient to not only pay for the past war, but one large enough to pay for the advance preparation of the coming world struggle.

Democracy is in many ways a conventional concept, one that has grown or been formed by custom.

So it is one that varies according to place and period.

Moreover, it is one that is circumscribed by class prerogatives—the peculiar privileges shared by property owners, but not applicable to non-owners, right from the beginning.

want to impress upon you the basic nature of society, and consequently the circumscribing of custom and ideas, and especially the domain of Law.

The crisis hinging upon the "finding" of the Arbitration Court Bench is one that is circumscribed by the property class of present Australian society, and therefore the judgment of the Court is definitely one that is biased in favor of the conventional, customary practice and rights of the employing class, and one bearing in mind that the Australian system is actively engaged in a world struggle that requires a docile, disciplined working class at home.

Last Thursday at Canberra Mr. Chifley (Prime Minister), in a press statement, announced that his Government had no intention of doing anything for workers.

It stated:

It has now been decided to relax the regulations further by conferring upon all industrial authorities, Commonwealth or State, the power to alter rates of remuneration" [note the language used: "remuneration" means: "to render an equivalent for any service"; yet under Chifley the workers have been steadily robbed of any vestige of equivalent.—J.A.D.] "in any type of case, provided the Chief Judge of the Commonwealth Court has first certified that he is satisfied that an alteration is not opposed to the national interest."

If ever the workers' noses were rubbed in the dirt of their conditions of slavery, then that happened when Chifley delivered this ruling.

Even the Sun had to say in an editorial yesterday that:

"The Prime Minister has sought to thrust on to the Chief Judge the task of interpreting the Government's economic policy . . . [and] to transfer to the court any odium that may attach to the Government's policy in the eyes of trade unionists."

Rightly, the Sun expects that the workers will see the odium of the con-

tinuation of the robbery of the wage-workers as the "economic policy" of the Labor Government.

Shame on Chifley and the Labor politicians as traitors and RATS to the workers of Australia!

Shame also on the workers for being voting cattle to put them in the seat of power to act as they have done.

"Democracy" is an old word—first coined in Greece about 3000 years ago—briefly meaning (from the Greek *demos kratos*): "the people rule."

In the Athenian democracy—the chattel slaves (a majority of the population) were not of "the people." "The people" only comprised the free gentiles—many of whom had already been divorced from the land, and, as free workers, not being able to economically compete against slave labor began to regard work as ignoble and only to be done by slaves.

There is a school who hold that ideas come first and practice is a result. I hold that this is an erroneous view.

Certainly there is a constant flow of sense perceptions into the brain which correlates these perceptions from without into ideas or viewpoints. But the great mass of ideas are sterile and end in blind alleys because they are not in line with man's practice. When ideas are in line with customary trends or with the facts of nature or society then such ideas are fruitful in opening the way to better understanding—the acquirement of knowledge that goes hand in hand with practice.

We can thus acquire ideas that arise from the shortcomings of practice—the idealist viewpoints of those who start off their aspirations with the words: "if only."

"If only men could think and see better what a wonderful world of democracy, etc., would result."

Such have yet to learn that it is the practice—the conventional customs of society that determine the road we socially travel, whether we like it or not. That custom can create conditions and opposition great enough to cause change is a different thing altogether—yet the idealist often gets the full credit for a change that was inherent within the old custom because of its generating an oppositional—a dialectical force towards such change.

That the more a thing changes, the more it remains the same, is mostly quite unknown to the idealist ignorant of the basic character of the "evil" he rails against.

Measured by that standard what has been the role of the Australian Labor Party.

It has prepared the working class as lambs for slaughter.

It has had the support of the Communists during the war years to regiment and discipline the workers to the acceptance of conditions that have more or less effectively tied the workers hand and foot and turned their trade unions into active agencies of supporting Australian Capitalism.

The trend of capitalism is eventually towards an organised world government—though as yet only in the form of two contending powers, threatening mankind with entire devastation.

The U.S. ideologists, as supporters of one of the contending powers, thus "proffer" their "democracy" to the world as an alternative to the "nation-

alism" of Russia.

Never perhaps in history were aspirations so hypnotising and drugging as a means of escape from the obvious FACTS of present and past economic life, as liberalism espouses to-day.

The American colonists revolted against the Absolutism of King James, who exercised that privilege and principle against the American colonies, even though it was being denied and contested at home in England—and so we find the valiant passages of the American Declaration of Independence echoing the aspirations of Cromwell's Commonwealth.

The cause of Absolutism still exists as a principle.

Absolutism is rearing its ugly head again as the Absolutism of Capital.

Let us first define Absolutism:—

The dictionary meaning of Absolutism is: "Government where the ruler is without restriction." That meaning would apply to its relationship to King Charles I and the struggle against it resulting in its limitation and its opposite—the sovereignty of parliament.

But the word Absolute from which it is derived has a larger meaning. Absolute: free from limits or conditions; whole; perfect; complete;—considered without reference to other things; unconditioned; unalterable; ultimate reality; independent of arbitrary measuring standards.

In that sense Property has been Absolute for thousands of years. It is still Absolute.

In this sense the Absoluteness of the King arose in feudalism because the King, in his own person, owned the whole land of England. The legal phraseology still persists in references to the Realm, the Crown. It is still exercised in time of war so far as is necessary.

Feudalism was the instrument to finally usurp the land from the people. Ancient gentile common ownership which had nominally passed to the chieftain or head of the clan (as in Scotland), became an Absolute Right of the King in feudal England.

That it was not always exercised or asserted does not alter the principle any more than that the Realm, the Crown, does not always exercise its Rights to-day—only in time of war.

Capitalism was the instrument to finally usurp Absolutism from the King, and to-day Capital is more and more asserting its own Absolutism.

Liberalism has always opposed absolutism without opposing its fundamental foundation or base.

Liberalism has always upheld the principle of Property.

The so-called hypocrisy of British Liberalism is merely the non-logic of appearances confronted with reality.

Liberalism has used materialism, and it has used religion as it suited their turn.

To-day there is no doubt in some American minds—for example, James Burnham (whose *Managerial Revolution* caused a stir amongst the thinkers seven years ago) has issued a new book (*The Struggle for the World*—John Day: \$3) in which he states the Soviet Union and the U.S. are the only two candidates for World Empire. There is a possibility, according to Burnham, and I think it more a probability, that the astute Com-

munists will be able to pick their own time for war between Russia and the U.S., and that Russia will win such a war, even though the U.S. had superiority in atomic weapons.

As this has been building up for a long time it is not strange that ideological forces have been working to offset it. The new surge for "democracy" is an effect. It takes on an appearance of criticism of the State, and the glorification of the individual.

As the State is an organ of capitalism, the appearance of such a criticism is not all that it would appear to be. It is an attempt to align working class elements alongside free enterprise capitalism.

Will we be realists enough to understand that this "crisis" is an effect of our being regimented to the struggle—the "crisis within capitalism"—now taking place for World Control?

Will we understand—?

That the struggle for POWER becomes a Totalitarian struggle and is reflected in the Power Politics of the national MACHINES of the contenders, just as surely as the party machines of rival political parties within nations is the reflection of contending sections within the capitalist system of the country. All such machines regiment and discipline their own membership to a given end so far as they have the power to do so.

The world struggle now assumes the appearance of conflicting interpretations of "democracy."

The fellow-travellers and the Communists aver that the U.S.S.R. Constitution is the most modern and realistic for a "democracy." They defend the "disciplining" of reluctant and rebellious workers as punishment for "treason" against the Socialist State.

What is the most important thing to wage-workers in the alleged "democratic" U.S.S.R. Constitution?

It is the stressing of the commodity status of the workers. That the worker shall be paid according to the amount of production he does.

The principle of speeding-up—of the butty gang system is thus enshrined as a worker's "right."

This is the genesis of the Communists traitorous conduct to the Australian working class during the war years.

Chifley last Thursday duck-shoved a similar decision on to the Chief Judge of the Arbitration Court, and so took it right out of the hands of Parliament to govern in the interests of the non-propertied electors, even though these were the ones whose votes returned the Labor politicians to their cushy jobs.

The Moscow Conference

What the working class have yet to understand—as the rival contending capitalist nations are beginning to understand—is that Moscow speaks with two voices. One is the language of nationalism, and that IS understood by the rival capitalist powers. It is in line with the evolved pattern of Russian History from which Bolshevism was only a partial detour, but which now has come back on to the main road as the successor and inheritor and active contender for all that Czar Peter the Great contended for—Russian Imperialist Expansion—but enriched by the understanding of the capitalist system supplied by Marxism. The other language that Moscow speaks—mostly to delude its own exploited working class—but also as a THREAT and a weapon AGAINST contending capitalist powers

is the language of social revolution. It is this dualism that confuses, because it is a subtle distortion of the class struggle, and as such is a dual weapon, first against the working class, and, secondly, against Western capitalism. This duality is a conscious nationalist weapon.

The outstanding FACT is that the world crisis—the clash of competitive capitalisms for Power—overshadows everything else to-day.

The administration of Australian Capitalism by the Chifley Labor Government, the interpretations of law by the Arbitration Court judges, the rivalry of the machines of the Labor Party and the Liberal Party, and their joint opposition of the Communist Party is all determined by the great world crisis of capitalism, and ideologically it appears as a crisis of democracy.

The recent strikes have been necessary against the capitalist class State lowering the purchasing power of wages and thus DIRECTLY REDUCING WAGES.

Parliament was the first line of attack upon workers' conditions of work and pay.

Because it was generally accepted in view of past experience that the war would increase prices, Parliament, on behalf of Australian capitalism, pegged and froze wages as the price of labor-power, and also pegged working class conditions, to prevent workers from striving to take advantage of a labor market in their favor, and at the same time debarred workers from holding what they had already achieved.

Under the stimulus of war effort the working day was extended to 10 and more hours, and the overtime pay successfully disguised the diminishing purchasing power of the nominal money wage, for an ordinary working day.

Both Parliament and the second power—the Arbitration Court and the High Court—are successfully combatting wage-workers' protests over the reduced real wage.

Both the Labor Party and the trade unions which have grown into instruments of mediation between capitalists, and/or the State, and workers, with the result that a crop of careerist politicians and officials have actually become a part of the power apparatus of capital and State. They are NO LONGER A WORKERS' INSTRUMENT.

The whole set-up of Parliament, Arbitration Court, and back-stop Trade Unions is one that MUST BE OPOSED by a more unified organisation of wage-workers who will take over the fight directly into their own hands, leaving the unions and Labor Party leaders outside.

Workers' Councils formed by the workers themselves in the shop, the mine and factory ON THE JOB are now VERY necessary.

Democracy can only be measured against its opposite—absolutism. And so democracy can only be relative.

But we do not live in a world of abstraction. We live in a real world of concrete experiences and practice.

We must, therefore, beware of being mentally trapped by abstract ideologies and/or by concepts that are true only under certain conditions and that mostly those conditions ARE NOT THE SAME for workers as they are for the owners of the means of production, the employing capitalist class.

The working class MUST LEARN TO THINK from its own base; from the

base of how they are exploited in the manner whereby they earn their livelihood.

Everything in society is relative to that ONE BASIC FACT that society exists because of the work of the working class. That there are two main classes in society.

That all historic events are conditioned by the fact of the exploitation of the workers, and the disposal of or the use to which that surplus is put.

That the working class and the employing class HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON. That History CAN BE CHANGED.

Metal Trades LOCK-OUT

"SELF-INFLICTED INJURIES" AND THE METAL TRADE DISPUTE

Under that headline the *Age* (3/3/46) writes, as a leading article:—

Week after week, as industrial turmoil persists, the disabling effects of stoppages become more apparent. A depressing catalogue of disputes and threatened extensions could be compiled to range over wide fields of production, transport and services. The spirit now rampant cannot but perturb all thoughtful observers, who see in current manifestations the negation and antithesis of "new order" hopes born of war. Industries that a year or eighteen months ago looked confidently forward to expansions find themselves fatally handicapped even in catering for domestic needs, let alone taking advantage of unique but fading opportunities in overseas markets.

This quotation highlights the "new order" hopes of capitalist apologists.

An old, old "new order" of exploiting workers to produce for export—to sell cheap—and turn Australia more than ever into a cheap labor country.

What does "taking advantage of unique opportunities in overseas markets" imply?

Can it imply anything else than an expansion of PROFIT for the OWNERS of the commodities produced for export?

And how have they been, and are being, produced?

At the lowest possible cost to the employers of Australia, whose lick-spittle Labor politicians have successfully enslaved the Australian wage-workers to carry the full burden of the cost of war—a war waged on behalf of Australian and Anglo-U.S. capitalism.

The reverse side of exporting cheap is the implied and practiced importing dear.

Every worker's wife knows how the "prices" of the commodities that make up the standard of living for Australian workers have risen.

The alleged luxuries that also are so necessary as "escape opiates" for wage workers to face existence—I refer to beer, tobacco, matches and cigarette papers, etc., are made the means of raising A LOT OF REVENUE for the capitalist State of Australia.

Whilst the rate of exploitation on the

job—in the workshop, mine, field and factory has RISEN by the introduction of "labor-saving" machines, processes and gadgets to such a high ratio that hitherto unheard of high taxation, etc., is paid by the employers, with the greatest of ease out of lush gross profits, and the wage workers PRODUCE a higher and higher amount of surplus over and above their own wage cost—the implacably GREEDY, blood-thirsting, murderous Employing Class of Capitalism have coaxed the alleged political representatives of the workers—the Labor Party—to accept the advice of the Coplands, Coombs and Company to strengthen such an exploitative system by thrusting the workers deeper into POVERTY.

In the political sphere of State Finance is introduced the technique of ROBBING THE WORKERS of the greater portion of the nominal wage they accept under the illusion that they will receive value for that paper wage in the goods that when purchased make up their REAL WAGE.

The *Age* is concerned that the workers more or less blind revolt against these conditions is keeping away from Australia more greedy, grasping exploiters-of-labor capitalists from overseas. The *Age* says:

"There is evidence that industrialists" [the *Age* always calls exploiting capitalists by the alias "industrialists"—an abbreviation only of industrial exploiters.—Ed. W.C.] "abroad who contemplated substantial investments for expansions of activities" (i.e., the exploiting of Australian workers for profit.—Ed. W.C.) "in this country are taking fresh stock of the position."

They, no doubt, are recognizing that the Australian worker is waking up to the capitalist method—and they don't want to deal with workers who are beginning to think and revolt.

The Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers, in locking out the metal workers, attempted to drive a wedge into the ranks of the workers. Blind class stubbornness refused to see that the workers' nominal wage was ONLY HALF THE REAL WAGE (in purchasing power) it was when awarded.

Blindly and stupidly they learnt nothing as to effect upon the ironworkers when TWICE their approach to the Arbitration Court was abortive—the second time Judge Foster clearly stated if they proceeded with the case he could only award a REDUCTION in their already inadequate miserable wage.

A circular letter (dated March 29) to manufacturer employers in the metal trade has been handed to me, in which it is evident that NO real consideration as to the matters in dispute will ever be given by the employers' executive. The "Umpire"—the Court—has already shown its BIAS, and they are content to starve (if they can) the workers into submission as the dispute spreads. They are evidently prepared to LOSE A MILLION POUNDS in this dispute rather than grant the workers a few hundred pounds.

They blindly believe things are in their favor, and their present losses will be equated for them by the Taxation Department by averaging their lush profit years against a poor profit year this year, resulting in A HUGE DRAW-BACK OF TAXATION already paid.

No language is strong enough to tell the S.O.B.'s off—but it should steal the workers' minds to seek a way OUT.

At heart the employers are a CRAVEN lot, depending on hired police and the law thuggery to protect them. This is a time when the personal Boycott weapon might have been effective—but that implies a conscious working class—and alas—the foul work has been done by Labor Party and Communists—the workers have little consciousness of self-reliance.

The *Age* drew into the picture, as a confusing, side-tracking device, the allegation that "the people at large are unoffending victims"; the *Age* idea, of course, is to get the "public" to think of themselves as victims of the revolting workers, not as victims of a chain of cause and effect. The CAUSE being wage-labor exploitation, and the inherent effect of a revolt by workers who can stand that exploitation no longer without a protest.

If the *Age* were logical and honest it would turn the "public" wrath upon the employers and their State. It would show the utter rattery and disloyalty of Labor politicians to the workers who elected them to ease working class burdens.

The FACT that working class burdens have increased—that the workers are poorer housed, poorer dressed, poorer fed, etc., should drive it home to the readers of the *Age* who still are suffering an illusion, that the highly paid leader writers of that journal are NO FRIENDS of the working class. These paid hirelings of a pro-capitalist press serve the employing class and the working class and the employing class HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON.

Whilst the workers do nothing effective about this problem, their weapon of despair—the strike—is often but a method of self-inflicting further injury upon themselves, as is most assuredly the electing to Parliament of Labor Party politicians to serve the employing class faithfully and well to the DIS-SERVICE of the workers. Electing Labor politicians or ANY other brand of politician who is working to an objective of making it possible for the capitalist (wage) system to run more smoothly is NO GOOD for the workers. They inflict self-injury upon their own class by so doing.

Exporting cheap in order to import dear is a necessary factor for the State to raise revenue by indirect taxation, which has as its consequence a LOWERED standard of living for the workers.

The workers MUST gain a consciousness that these things are as I have stated, and then strive for an Objective of COMMON USE, OWNERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC CONTROL of production of all the things necessary for their own comfort and well-being—for the USE of all, and not to sell.

Of all the proposals put forward with such an Objective, that of the I.W.W. is the one that shows a logical and sure method of success. When the working class by I.W.W. practice gain a knowledge of what is possible and practicable to forward their aims then only will they be able to pick out representatives to serve them on the political field by exposing the class nature of the Capitalist State and furthering the education so necessary to be allied to organization for the emancipation of the working class.

Without such an understanding Political Action is useless, and merely a method of inflicting self-injury upon the working class.

Readers will understand that I write as an independent, and not as representing the I.W.W.

PALESTINE

Despite the fact that Jewish and Arab workers are amicable, and that the greater portion of Jews and Arabs live peaceably together, Palestine is one of the cock-pits of the world struggle in which the Arabs are being wooed and the Jews exploited as a counter-force by "great and unscrupulous Powers."

On April 28 a Special Assembly of the United Nations is to be held in New York, when Arab countries may state their case. The *Age* special correspondent in New York writes:

"Some sensational disclosures might be made if the Arabs feel they are being cornered. Already there have been public charges by responsible people that the United States State Department has played a double game with the Arabs and Jews. Arabs could also disclose details of some recent American oil deals in their lands, and which, with similar British deals, are the core of the whole Palestinian problem."

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Box 573D, Melbourne.

DEATH COMES UNDER CAPITALISM

U.S. mine inspectors had been denouncing Centralia Coal Company's Mine No. 5 for years—one recent report had listed many dangerous violations of safety codes, but little had been done to correct them.

At half-past three one April afternoon, far down a drift called Main West—a four-mile bore, gas or coal dust exploded like powder going off in a gun barrel. In all, 111 coal miners died—a senseless tragedy. Four hundred thousand U.S. soft coal miners came out for a week's mourning.

After four days' search, three and a half miles in Main West, fourteen men, the last of No. 5's day shift, lay face down on the tunnel floor—each of them knowing no help would reach them in time, had left a note, says *Time*.

One miner had scrawled: "It looks like the end for me. I love you, Honey, more than life itself. You are the sweetest wife in the world. Good-bye, Honey and Dickey." Another note was addressed to two boys: "Be good boys. Please your father. O, Lord, help me." Some had been jotted down at intervals: "I am fine at 5.30 — is in bad shape, going on and moaning. Tell — I forgive her. Everyone going." Another read: "My dear wife: Good-bya. Name the baby Joe, so you will have a Joe. Love, all. Dad."

At 9.14 on April 16 a fire in a hold of dangerously explosive ammonium nitrate is said to have exploded the ammunition in the next hold of a freighter at Texas City and caused a chain of explosions that wiped out the Monsanto Chemical plant, two or more oil refineries, and several ships. Over 200 lives were lost, and between two and three thousand injured. Criminal carelessness or sabotage?