

## **Socialist Federation of Australasia Principles and Policy, 24 February 1912**

### **1. Objective**

The socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

### **2. Statement of Principles**

The present form of Society rests on private ownership of the land and the machinery (tools) of production.

The owners of most of the land and the machinery of production constitute what is economically known as the capital class. Hence the use of the term, 'The capitalist form of society'.

This form of ownership divides society in all countries into two distinct and opposing classes—the capitalist class and the working class.

The working class produces all the wealth that sustains society, while it is held in complete economic and industrial subjection to the capitalist class, which lives on the wealth produced by the working class.

To enable the working class to wage the class war, it must be fully conscious of the wrongs inflicted upon the workers by the capitalist class; and it must organise industrially to voice its wrongs and assert its claims. Then it will be prepared for political action to overthrow the usurping class and to abolish classes for ever.

The deaths by starvation, the millions of unemployed, the excessive toil for bare subsistence, the poverty, crime, and consequent misery, are all the direct outcome of domination by the ruling class. That class must go.

The Socialist Federation of Australasia demands common ownership of all agencies of wealth production by the people themselves and the control of all industrial affairs on the basis of social equality.

The workers of Australia must, without delay, take up their position along with the organised, class-conscious workers of all other countries. There is no escape from the thralldom of capitalism short of its complete overthrow, and this can only be achieved by the class-conscious industrial and political strength of the working class.

The Socialist Federation of Australasia, therefore, calls upon all workers to forthwith identify themselves with the existing Socialist organisations in the respective States, and to work unceasingly for the complete overthrow of the capitalist system, and for the emancipation of their class from wage slavery.

### **3. Guiding Rule**

The Socialist Federation of Australasia shall always and everywhere, until the present system is abolished, make the answer to this question its guiding rule of conduct:— Will the proposal advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will, the Socialist Federation is for it; if it will not, the Socialist Federation is absolutely opposed to it.

### **4. As to Palliatives**

Whereas the advocacy of political palliatives (so-called) tends to obscure the working class objective of emancipation from wage slavery, and thus causes the workers to expend time and effort to little purpose; and

Whereas political palliatives (so-called) as adopted by legislatures have rarely proved efficacious, and have usually created the need for further legislative restrictions, and therefore kept working class action circular instead of straight; and

Whereas political palliatives, even if desirable are best obtained by educating and organising for basic ends, inasmuch as sops have ever been conceded when something more fundamental is the demand; be it

Resolved that the Socialist Federation of Australasia declares against a programme of palliatives, and urges the workers to concentrate their energies upon abolishing capitalism by perfecting their industrial organisations and only using the ballot for Socialist propaganda.

#### **5. As the Political Action**

No member of the Federation shall stand as, vote for, or support other than a Revolutionary Socialist, for parliamentary or municipal office.

Socialist candidates shall be [endorsed] by the organizations concerned, and before running be endorsed by the national executive, to which the candidate shall pledge himself to advocate and support the principles and policy of the S.F.A. Before entering on a campaign a candidate shall hand to his organization a written resignation, to be used in the event of him swerving from the Socialist policy.

A candidate must have been for twelve months a member of an organization affiliated with the international Socialist Bureau.

That for the purposes of the foregoing resolution, a Revolutionary Socialist Party shall be any party which bases its propaganda on a recognition of the class struggle; declares for the Socialist Republic—ie the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange; and has no program of palliatives.

#### **6. As to unionism**

The Federation declares for Industrial Unionism. The Federation affirms its pronounced and mature conviction that Compulsory Arbitration, Wages Boards, the New Protection, and the like, as manifested in slightly-differing enactments in the Australian States and New Zealand, have not proved advantageous to the working class.

#### **7. As to Compensation**

The Federation vehemently protest against the working class being misled by the Labor or other parties into the belief that it is possible to socialize the instruments of production by a gigantic scheme of 'buying out', or compensation to the possessing class, and warns the workers against endorsing such a utopian, immoral, and impracticable plan.

#### **8. As to Militarism**

The S.F.A. declares itself uncompromisingly hostile to all forms of militarism, recognising that whilst the present class State exists the armed forces will be used to buttress up capitalism, and to hold down the workers. The Federation further recognises that all the energies of the working class can be most profitably utilised in building up their industrial and political organizations, which shall finally render war impossible, and which organizations by international affiliation and alliances between the working classes of all nations are at present the chief guarantee of the peace of the world.

#### **9. As to Sunday Schools**

In declaring for the need of Socialist Sunday Schools, the S.F.A. urges that same be established whenever and wherever circumstances permit.

#### **10. As to Historical Materialism**

The S.F.A. pledges itself to materialist conception of history, which asserts that the transition from one system of society to another, as in the past, from primitive communism to chattel slavery, from chattel slavery to feudalism, and from feudalism to the present Capitalist State, has been the result of new and improved methods of production, and the time has now arrived when the present scientific tools of production, by their being socially owned, make possible the establishing of the Socialist Republic.

From *International Socialist*, 24 February 1912; see James Normington Rawling Collection, ANU Archives of Business and Labour, Item N57/615. Reprinted in David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp.265-267