

SOCIALIST COMMENT

SOCIALIST PARTIES OF AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND

VOL. II, No. 3.

NOVEMBER, 1946

ONE PENNY

The Socialist Party of New Zealand's Appeal to Workers of New Zealand

1946 ELECTIONS

Fellow Workers,

Twenty-seven successive Parliaments have come and gone since the passing of the Constitution Act, by the Imperial Parliament, on the 30th June, 1852. The date for the election of the 28th Parliament, November 27, 1946, has been proposed.

The vote you cast on this day will be eagerly sought by some one or other representative of the possessing class desirous of bolstering up Capitalism—the present system based, as you should know, on the private ownership of the means of living.

Laborites, Nationalists, Democratic Laborites, Communists (so-called), Independents—all of them—aid and abet the continuance of Government by and in the interests of a wealthy ruling and possessing class.

The reforms, the promises of prosperity, the security offered by the representatives of the above-mentioned political parties; these are the bait used to catch the votes of the non-possessing class—the workers. Approximately nine out of every ten voters belong to this class, hence the anxiety of the politicians to catch these votes and the seeming abandon with which they make promises, and proffer reforms of Capitalism.

An overwhelming majority of these votes means the capture of the key of the situation—Political Power—and with it all the forces now used to keep the workers in subjection—the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Police.

On each election day the workers hold in their hands one of the essential means by which they can convert these armed forces from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation. We say, one of the essential means, advisedly, as the other and most essential means to back this vote is socialist understanding. It is obvious then that a majority of workers who have acquired this understanding—in other words, a class-conscious majority of workers—can bring about their emancipation from wage slavery.

Those who understand the basis of the present system—Capitalism—will not deny that the position of the immense majority of the people is that of wage slaves or of dependence upon wage slaves.

To quote the words of Marx in "Wage Labor and Capital" (Lawrence and Wishart, p. 32), "Capital therefore, presupposes wage-labor; wage-labor presupposes capital. They condition each other; each brings the

other into existence." This is as applicable today as when it was written. Furthermore, whether Capital is owned and controlled by the State (e.g. Railways, Road Motor Services, the Bank of N.Z.), or by private persons, matters little. The position of the majority remains the same. They are wage slaves producing surplus value—surplus or foreign wealth for an owning class.

With the foregoing in mind we must examine the policies and platforms of the contending parties. The main contenders, the Labor and Nationalist parties, are making almost identical offers. In fact, it would seem that the Nationalists have adopted, *holus bolus*, the policy of the Labor Party, including a plank of the latter's old platform, so quietly dropped by them of recent years, namely, "The abolition of the Legislative Council."

The difference between these parties is that Labor claims that the reforms advocated by both can be better implemented by a greater degree of State control. The Nationalists claim that private enterprise can better implement them.

When addressing a meeting of Waterside Workers in Wellington, the Prime Minister, Mr. P. Fraser, expressed surprise that the National Party was contesting the election. Owing to the similarity of the programs he contended that they were wasting time. He claimed that the Labor Party could carry out the policy more efficiently than the Nationalists.

The program of the "Communist" Party, published in the "Peoples' Voice", September 18, 1946, differs slightly from the Labor Party's, and is headed, "Nationalise Key Industries; Non-contributory Social Security; Raise Wages; Lift Taxes on Workers." Not one word of explanation of Socialism or Communism, of how the workers can achieve this object, which is the ONLY solution to their problems. The whole program is a familiar list of reforms no different in essentials from other parties. No doubt, as in the past, they will continue to change and twist their party line to the needs of the tortuous foreign policy of the Russian ruling class.

Other parties contesting the election have no essential differences in their programs. All agree that the basic conditions for the exploitation of the immense majority—the workers—shall be retained. These basic

conditions are the private ownership in the means of living, the relation of wage-labor to capital. Poverty, Unemployment, and War are effects these conditions.

A study of the wages system, fellow workers, will enable you to arrive at the conclusion that the only solution to the problems that confront you is Socialism. The task of achieving Socialism has, in many minds, come to be associated with movements to make capitalism run more smoothly by means of social and political reforms. It is important to the Socialist movement that the two purposes should be quite distinct. Only convinced Socialists can work for Socialism, but reform movements attract conscious as well as unknowing defenders of Capitalism. Some of them are anxious only to alleviate suffering. Others support reforms as a method of making Capitalism more secure.

Hence the reason for the entry of the Socialist Party of New Zealand into the field of political action. As the SP.N.Z. insists that social reforms, whether introduced by National, Labor, or so-called Communist parties cannot lead to Socialism, it follows that the SP.N.Z. restricts its membership to those who are convinced socialists. We claim that given Socialist knowledge the workers will take the necessary steps to organise politically for the democratic conquest of political power, for the purpose of introducing Socialism.

We therefore appeal to all workers to study the socialist case and join us in the task of propagating socialist knowledge, thereby hastening the day when a majority of workers become convinced that Socialism is the ONLY remedy for social ills, and thereupon vote a majority to Parliament to introduce it. Failure on the part of those most concerned—the workers—to bring this about, will mean the retention of Capitalism and its effects, unemployment, poverty, and modern wars with their new horrors, atomic bombs and rockets.

We address ourselves to the workers because we know that they alone are able to deliver mankind from the horrors of such wars.

The Socialist Party of New Zealand, and its companion parties in Great Britain, Canada, U.S.A. and Australia, call upon the workers to help them achieve their object: The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole.

It is the ONLY remedy.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

S.P.N.Z.

RIGHTS.

The "Communist" Party urged Nationalisation—after it had exposed it a few years ago—the usual program of reform, supported the Labor Party as the "lesser evil." Its vote dropped, but, as it had less candidates than last year, this cannot be interpreted as a weakening of working class illusions about the A.C.P.

As for informal votes, it is notable that, on these issues, where the social issue was distributed showed a higher number of them than other electorates. However, we are averse from drawing over-optimistic conclusions from this fact.

SUMMING UP.

Capitalism gives rise to crises, depression and unemployment, whatever government administrators it. Expanding production and shrinking world markets, the fact that the workers never can receive enough wages to buy back what they produce, the need for a permanent army of unemployed to keep wages down, these are economic realities not affected by promises or good intentions. The new Labor Government, like the old, will continue the experiment in "vain attempt" to make the system more palatable to the workers. It will no doubt introduce some plinch penny reforms, destined to go to the breaking of an anachronistic social setup. Basically, the victory of the Labor Party presents a further step in the direction of Social Capitalism, a vain attempt to smooth out the worst features of Capitalism and tie the working class ever more firmly to the exploiters.

The more tractable sections of the ruling class fully realise that it is easier to "pacify" (i.e., exploit) the workers under a "progressive" than a "reactionary" government, because, with a Labor administration, the Trade Unions are tied even more firmly to the State Machine. Demands for lifting of wage pegging and the 40-hour week are met with the cry of "maintaining economic stability." Trade Union "leaders" attempt to pacify the rank and file when they give direct action by begging them to go easy. After all the workers are told, it is "OUR" government, and thus we must not embarrass it too much. One has only to consider the weak-kneed attitude of the A.C.T.U. to realise the fallacy of the pernicious doctrine that the Labor Party is "the lesser evil."

To us, it is "a plague on both their sides." We wholeheartedly support the efforts of our fellow workers in their strikes against increasing impoverishment. On the industrial field, the time for action is not as favorable as it was during the war, when those now posing as militants helped to worsen conditions. Before the elections, these parties urged support of the Labor Party—now, a few weeks after they "discover" that the government they helped to elect stands for Capitalism.

In the unions, individual Socialists will fight for improved conditions—pointing out all the while that, even if all the A.C.T.U. demands were met, present standards of living would not have been reached, however.

S. O. S.!

Our funds are low. We depend on working-class support. If you care, send us a donation.

Treasurer,

"Socialist Comment"

P.O. Box 1440-M, Melb.

merging home the fact that Capitalism MUST lead to increased poverty and exploitation, and that Socialism is the only solution. As a party we can but carry on with the uphill work of making Socialists and advocating Socialism.

NEW PAMPHLET

"Is Labour Govt. the Way to Socialism?"
7d., Post Free

CUTTINGS & COMMENTS

NEW SCENT.

"Former explosive factories in Moscow are being transformed into factories for the production of perfumes, says Tatjana Morozova, manager of one of these, hopes to produce 85 million bottles of perfume next year. One of her new scents is 'Stalin's Breath'—Die Weltwoche," Zurich, Switzerland, 15/2/46.

Just a bit too strong for our liking, we'd say.

THE ARBITRATION COURT.

"Between 1921 and 1940, 5730 disputes were decided and 951 ended in compromises or with indefinite results. Of those decided, 3861 or 73.3 per cent were decided in favor of employers, and 1409, or 26.7 per cent, in favor of workers. In these disputes a total of 1,793,188 workers were involved, and decisions were given against 1,436,689 of them, or 79.6 per cent."—Letter in "Age," 5/9/46. Our emphases.

More Profits for Rouble Millionaires.

"—The Red Army is developing the world's greatest cartel in the Russian zone." "Sovietische Industrie Gesellschaft" (Soviet Industrial Company) is reported to be owned as follows: 51 per cent by the Russians, and 49 per cent by the Germans respectively. The cartel owns nearly a third of the greatest industries in the Russian zone, and is seizing new plants daily. Value of the cartel is already 340,000,000.—"Age," 13/2/46.

Remember who raised the cry about "dissolving German monopolies"? Yes, you guessed it.

Lynchings and Slavery.

"A delegation of negroes told President Truman today that if the U.S. Government did not do something about lynching the negroes would ... In a public statement ... the delegation said that 41 lynchings had been reported since the end of the war, but not a single arrest, indictment or conviction had been made."—"Herald," 28/9/46.

"Conditions of near slavery are being

forced on aboriginal women employed on some big northern properties, according to allegations by a patrol officer of the Native Affairs Branch."—"Herald," 27/9/46.

In the Slums.

"Children in Slums get no Holid— "How old are you, John?" "Thirteen, sir." "Have you ever been to the country, John?" "No, sir." "Have you ever been to the beach?" "Oh, yes, sir." "Where did you go?" "To Port Melbourne." For the afternoon. "These answers are typical of hundreds of cases in some of Melbourne's worst inner suburbs."—"Herald," 2/10/46.

"Port Melbourne itself a slum district, is about ten minutes train ride from the city. No comment needed, we think."

The Next Depression.

"Pat contingency funds have been accumulated by many great U.S. concerns in readiness for the day when consumer resistance to development prices declines. The most sober forecasters say that prices will break early in 1947. The basic opinion on a personal survey shows that textiles are already beginning to accumulate and that all levels of trade will far surpass demand by the middle of 1947. Observers see a big danger in stores being left a bagful of undelivered orders if prices slump."—"Herald," 26/9/46.

We like consumer resistance as a description or jargonese label for being plain broke, i.e., for the working class.

An article, "Who owns America?" in the August "Western Socialist," our U.S. Companion journal, reveals that the talk about the workers having accumulated vast savings during the war is so much apple sauce and moonshine.

The situation is basically similar in Australia, and in spite of Mr. Chifley's "good intentions" the next depression will be more severe than any preceding one. It is true, however, that, due to Australia's relatively recent entry into the capitalist system, there is still some room for capitalist expansion here. However, the war acted as a hot-house on this development, and hence the Australian economy will be more severely effected by the coming depression than it was by the last one.

What Capitalism offers you: Insanity.

"One person in every 250 of the population of Australia was insane. Dr. Idris Morgan, of Newcastle, told the 55th annual conference of New South Wales Health Inspectors. Twenty per cent. of the population suffered some kind of mental illness, he said, in emphasising that mental ailments were increasing at an alarming rate. The causes were fear, anxiety, excessive fatigue and feelings of frustration and inferiority."—"Herald," 4/10/46.

Workers, a cheerful future is in store for you. If you SHOULD be lucky enough to keep your job in the next slump, and NOT be killed by stone bodies in the new world, you can then settle down in peace and go slowly nuts.

—H.

THE LABOR GOVERNMENT

A SAFETY VALVE FOR CAPITALISM

For the next three years Australia will have a Federal Labor Government, with a slightly decreased majority in the House of Representatives and an increased majority in the Senate. The electors have spoken, and have returned the Chifley administration. The Reformers have been carried on the Social Services question, but has fallen on the Primary Products and Employment questions.

We maintain that the Labor Party will be unable to avoid the next depression, that it will, however, have a lively alibi in the failure of the reformers, and that there has been no change whatsoever in the fundamentals of Capitalism. Nor will the Labor Party be able to carry out a single of the promises made by it.

"Promises" some reader will exclaim. "But Mr. Chifley made no promises. Unlike the Liberals, he is honest and sincere." Let us see.

"TRUST ME." On his 51st birthday, Mr. Chifley spoke at Katoomba, where he said: "The Labor Party was a movement of great religion, and they could trust him" (Melbourne Herald, 9/9/46).

Of the Labor Party, he said: "It is a truly Australian Party, with the unique property that it finds a place for every shade of Australianism." And: "He (Chifley) claims the big industrialists, the private banker and the employer are just ordinary human 'blokes' who will in due course emancipate socialism—(Herald, 3/9/46).

Let us first grant that both Mr. Chifley and the "big industrialists" are ordinary human blokes. Let us, in addition, grant that Mr. Chifley is honest and sincere. So what? The evils of Capitalism are not caused by the good or bad intentions of the ruling class, nor are they affected by the sincerity or dishonesty of Labor "leaders." It is not the socialist view that capitalists are monsters in human shape, rather we realise that AS INDIVIDUALS they may be likeable or unpleasant, good or bad. But, if they are to survive as a class, they must, nilly-willy act in the interests of their class. They must follow the economic laws of the system, laws which they do not control, but which control them. As for trusting anyone, we repudiate the idea of a blind following, trusting leaders, however "sincere" they might be. Leadership can only flourish where mass-ignorance of social conditions exists.

LABOR'S PROMISES.

The general idea that it was only the Liberal Party which was SPECIALLY refrained from doing so, is absolutely false. The party of big business and monopoly, the Liberals, is so obviously an anti-working class body that we need not spend any time on it in this article. What is true is that the Liberals may SPECIALLY refrain from doing so, while Labor confined itself to VAGUE, GENERAL ones, but they were ever so much more grandiloquent in proportion. Here they are no longer to be feared that they should not come to the people and make promises which cannot be completely sure can be

labor rule have shown Mr. Little distinction, they are essentials being administration by the Australian Labor and anti-Labor Governments." ("Times" leader, q. in "Herald," 28/9/46.) The Labor electors: "Whether in domestic, foreign or Empire policy, there was at present little distinction between the Australian parties." ("Morning Star" and "News" of economic control and planning during the war would be forced on any government sooner or later. The initials "TOWNSHIP OF MOUNTAIN AND EXTENDING SOCIAL LEGISLATION IS GENERAL, and the outstanding task of the moment—call— industrial unrest and stimulating production—is not likely to yield to purely party prescription." ("Times" leader, q. in "Herald," 30/9/46.) The "Herald" Finance Editor reported that there was "No drastic Changes in Business Outlook" and that "Plans for business remain relatively unchanged" (30/9/46). (Our emphases.)

"HONEST OPPORTUNISM IS PERHAPS THE MOST DANGEROUS OF ALL."
—Frederick Engels.

WHY REFERENDUM FAILED.

Actually, a majority of ELECTORS approved the three issues, but the requisite majority of states was not obtained for the Marketing and Employment questions. As we stated last month, the carrying over of the Referendum makes no difference to the Australian working class, but it is interesting to observe the reasons for the failure, and for the high number of informers. We are not deluding ourselves that all these had "Socialism" written across the ballot paper. The real reason, as was obvious to anyone studying Labor's election propaganda, was that the Party did not want the Referendum to succeed. Its failure, complete or partial, would provide it with an alibi, while if it was carried it would have been somewhat harder to find a good reason why the "golden age" did not materialise. "Oddest feature of Government campaigning to date is that almost every Government speaker on almost every platform has either ignored ... or is dismissing the referendum with a brief incidental mention." (The plain truth is that the longer-headed members of the industrial power.

to produce a Federal labor government, any inclination to fix wages or hours by legislation." The excuse: No powers. "But if the industrial power should be conceded this traditional excuse will lose its validity." ("E. H. Cox in "Herald," 13/9/46.) Mr. Chifley ignored the referendum almost entirely, except for one small Sydney rally (28/9/46). Let us generally, a sober outline of responsibilities, and the program of A PARTY PLEDGED TO ORTHODOX, EVEN CONVENTIONAL METHODS OF CHANGE." ("Age" 3/9/46, our emphasis.) And the London "Times" was equally emphatic: "Despite party propaganda designed to persuade the electors, five years of

production would be forced on any government sooner or later. The initials "TOWNSHIP OF MOUNTAIN AND EXTENDING SOCIAL LEGISLATION IS GENERAL, and the outstanding task of the moment—call— industrial unrest and stimulating production—is not likely to yield to purely party prescription." ("Times" leader, q. in "Herald," 30/9/46.) The "Herald" Finance Editor reported that there was "No drastic Changes in Business Outlook" and that "Plans for business remain relatively unchanged" (30/9/46). (Our emphases.)

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(Continued Page Two)

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This Month's Quote in full: "This forgetfulness of the great main standpoints in the monetary interests of the day, this struggling and striving for the success of the moment without consideration for the later consequences, this sacrifice of the future of the movement for its present may be 'honestly' meant, but it is and remains opportunism, and 'honest' opportunism is perhaps the most dangerous of all."

Subscribe now! Don't miss these interesting articles in coming issues! "Palestine" Two articles: Political Background; Economic Background.—"The Strikes—their real meaning." "Socialism and 'Dirty Work.'" etc., etc.

Democracy—N.Z. Version.

"The bulk of military defaulters would not be able to register for voting at the coming election . . . said a representative of the National Service Dept. today . . . It was set out in Electoral Emergency Regulations 1943, that the names of all persons who had been committed to a defaulters' detention camp and had not been discharged should be erased from every electoral roll."

Exercise in Logic: Take a war (said to be for Democracy). Take men who exercise their alleged democratic rights and refuse to take part in that war. Take these two factors—and what have you got? Those who dare exercise their "rights" are to be deprived of them, not only during, but after, the war. Of course, New Zealand has a democratic government, and it's a Labor Party one. So—what have you?

But even that isn't enough: "A resolution passed unanimously at a meeting of the Dominion council of the Returned Services Association in August, 1943, contended that defaulters should be debarred from civil rights for 10 years. At a meeting tonight the R.S.A. decided to send a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, reiterating the previous resolution."—(Cutting from "Auckland Star," 9/10/46.)

Ten years is a bit optimistic, gentlemen! By that time, unless the workers wake up, Capitalism is quite likely to have produced another war.

—T.G.—SPNZ.

COMPANION PARTIES

- S.P. of Canada. P.O. Box 1751, Winnipeg, Man.
- S.P. of Great Britain. 2 Rugby St., London, W.C.1.
- S.P. of New Zealand. P.O. Box 62, Petone, N.Z.
- Workers S.P. of U.S. 27 Dock Sq., Boston 8, Mass.



LECTURES

MELBOURNE.

"Lessons of the Strike."—J. Topp. "This Business of History."—T. Dennis. "Palestine and the Jews."—C. Sanders. **FOR DATES, SEE "AGE."**

Other Tuesdays: Branch Meetings. Open to Public. All activities at: Temperance Hall, Russell Street, 8 p.m. Lectures advertised "Age," Saturday, "Meetings" Column.

NEW ZEALAND.

Auckland: Economic and Discussion Class, every Monday, 7.30 p.m. Carpenters' Union Rooms, Union Bank of Australasia Bldgs, East Street and Karangahape Road. **Petone:** Watch local Press! All Lectures, etc., free. Questions, Discussion. Come along!

AUSTRALIAN BRANCHES.

S.P.A.—SYDNEY: P.O. Box 2291, G.P.O. Meets fortnightly, Tuesdays, Room 99, Station House, Rawson Place. Public invited.

S.P.A.—MELBOURNE: P.O. Box 1440-M. Meets every Tuesday. See "Lectures."

THIS AND THAT

"Accounts issued by 36 companies last week reveal profits (compared with the previous year) as follows: Higher 16 Lower 5. Steady . . . 15." — "Herald" Finance Editor, 10/9/46. "Average Pay drops in Australia—13/9 Lower Thaa in 1943."—From figures of Commonwealth Statistician. "Herald," 19/9/46.

EXCHANGES.

Parties and groups wishing to exchange with "Socialist Comment" are asked to send us a copy of their publication, marking it "Exchange List."

S.P.A.

OBJECT.—The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments of production and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

S.P.N.Z.

1. The Socialist Parties of Australia and New Zealand hold: That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the

monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE SOCIALIST PARTIES OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND therefore enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and call upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under their banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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