

SOCIALIST COMMENT

SOCIALIST PARTIES OF AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND

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ONE PENNY

So Long Sucker!

A TOPICAL TALE

The shades of night were falling fast
As on his way to work there passed
And muttered to himself the while:
A chap who plodded mile by mile
"WORK HARDER!"

The transport men were out on strike
Which meant nine miles he had to
hike
Quoth he, "I'll get to work or bust!
I can't let strikes stop me, I must
"WORK HARDER!"

"O stay," his missus cried, "and rest
At home today. It would be best.
A holiday would do you good."
But off he set, so that he could
"WORK HARDER!"

His mates had often asked him Why?
But always got the same reply:
'It's 'Socialists' who rule today,
So we must all do what they say:
"WORK HARDER!"

"A Brave New World is being made
But Britain must step up her trade.
Around the corner we shall see
Prosperity, if only we
"WORK HARDER!"

There passed him in a limousine
A Labor leader, sleek, serene,
Who, as his chauffeur drove him by
Leaned out the window thus to cry:
"WORK HARDER!"

"There goes," he cried, "our leader
great,
The captain of the ship of State.
How great a 'Socialist' is he!
He knows it's good for us if we
"WORK HARDER!"

He reached at last the factory gates,
To find in picket line his mates.
"We're out," they said, "We want
more pay,
But this is all the boss will say
"WORK HARDER!"

"What matters it if pay is wrong,
Conditions bad, or hours long?"
Our hero cried, "The country's need
Must come before our selfish greed,
"WORK HARDER!"

This said, he tried to shove beyond
—They took and dumped him in the
pond.
"If you like rotten pay, we don't."
They said, "We'll see to it you won't
"WORK HARDER!"

With weary limbs he climbed
the hill,
To find his home deserted still.
His family's note he read: "We've
gone,
No more can stand your silly drone:
"WORK HARDER!"

The years rolled by; and then
there came
The day the foreman called his name
"The boss would like a word or two
Perhaps he knows how loyal you
"WORK HARDER!"

"Come in!" The boss's voice rang
clear,
"I have bad news for you, I fear.
Through you we have so much in
store,
We shall not need you any more,
YOUR CARDS, SIR!"
—Nobby in "Industrial Worker" USA.

The Paradise of Arbitration

WHAT WICKED WORKERS SHOULD KNOW.

"Industrial Regulation in Australia"

—A study of awards, method of remuneration fixation and the status of trade unions under the Australian regulative system. By O. de R. Foerander, LL.M., Lecturer in Industrial Relations, Melbourne University. M.U.P., 1947, pp.232)

This is Mr. Foerander's fourth book on Arbitration. Like its predecessors, it adopts a legal approach. Mr. Foerander lives in a world which is that of the law courts, his food and drink are Arbitration reports, and if he ever believed that there might be more to "industrial relations" than Arbitration decisions, he does not betray it.

The book falls into three parts—the first two dealing with the methods of award, and with the Basic Wage. Lack of space compels us to confine our remarks to the third part of the book, where the author attempts to assess the "changed status of Trade Unions" under the Arbitration system.

To the author there is only one cause of all social advance: "THE LAW." Unblemished by the bias of judges and the nature of present day society where some are foolish enough

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to see conflicting interests, "the Law" is enshrined in a cloud—cuckoo land—sitting on a throne marked "Arbitration". Justice, we know, is blind—her scales are never weighed. It is just an accident that of all the decisions of the Arbitration Court between 1921 and 1940, 73.3% were made in favour of the employers, and 26.7% in favor of the workers. ("Age" 6-9-46). If it is not an accident, then it just shows that the employers are right, two times out of three.

It was "the Law" which Australian Courts adopted from England which enabled our Unions to "exert any decisive influence." (p.170) Their influence had no connection with their strength and their growth—without "the Law" they would have been helpless. And "the Law" of course, is something handed down to the workers on a gold plate—they never had to fight for Trade Union rights. Perish the thought.

LAMENT.

Though "the Law" and with it "the Court" are supreme to Mr. Foerander, he occasionally sounds a wistful note. It is sad, very sad, that foolish workers somehow do not seem to see eye to eye with him. For example, the Arbitration Court has the power to order a secret ballot in a union. The author gives four instances where it has done so. Three are minor affairs, where the union concerned co-operated. But the fourth—the fourth, alas, is a case where "the limitations and difficulties that beset the holding of a compulsory ballot without the co-operation of the union were soon exposed." Who were those naughty workers who would not co-operate? The Timber Workers, in 1929. Why did

they refuse to co-operate? Mr. Foerender does not tell you, but we will. They were just a little bit annoyed with an award made by Judge Lukin in February 1939. The award was a fine award, an award the Timber workers ought to have been proud of. It cut their margins, prescribed piece work, doubled the proportion of youths who might be employed in industry and cut their wages. But, in its benevolence, the Law took notice of the fact that official living costs had just risen by 5 7/8%. To compensate for this rise, it cut wages by up to 10%. What did the workers do? Well, believe it or not, they weren't pleased. The ACTU decided to boycott the Arbitration Court — those were the days — and workers went on strike. The Court fined the Union £1000, just to show it how it ought to behave. It ordered a secret ballot on the question of accepting the Lukin award.

But the ungrateful workers, who are always being 'misled' by 'irresponsible' people, instead of showing that they had been intimidated by a minority, acted very strangely. 15,000 ballots went out—only 6000 came back and out of these 5316 were votes against the award. But that was not all. The Sydney Timber workers went further in their dastardly behaviour. They burned the Judge's effigy on the Domain, and danced round it, singing: 'We'll hang Judge Lukin from our scurvy tree'.

The strike leaders and the disputes committee were arrested. Ten pickets got from 6 to 18 months' gaol. Arbitration had triumphed once more just as it had triumphed in the Broken Hill strike of 1909, the Gas Strike of 1913, the General Strike of 1917, the Broken Hill Strikes of 1919-20, the British Seaman's Strike of 1925, the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Strike of 1926.

WICKED PEOPLE

To Mr. Foerender, these strikes are just accidents—they should not have happened. He does not mention them, reading him you would think there hadn't been any strikes since the 1870's. There is no place for direct action in the scheme of compulsory arbitration." (p. 173). Trust that.

But Mr. Foerender, who is so anxious to show us the glories of arbitration must have heard of those irresponsible people who whisper in dark corners. They sneer at Law and Order. They dare suggest that all those decisions of the Arbitration Court which ever granted an increase in wages were achieved by the pressure of direct action, or the threat of it. They show much at the Court, even go as far as to suggest that Judges are not objective. They mention the fact that the present Chief Judge, Drake-Brockman, was a former Nationalist Senator, Chairman of the Employers' Federation. From this they draw the most improper conclusions. They contrast the rapidity of the 1911 Bait at the Court, even the length of the 40-hour work week being. In fact, these people don't doff their hats to Arbitration.

They are wicked people, anti-social elements with no right side, lacking the lefty sentiments which inspire

the rest of the community. We of course, would not associate with them—we would not even recognize them if we saw them. But, sad to relate, they exist. Mr. Foerender ought to have devoted a page or two to them, giving them a fatherly advice on how to mend their ways.

BALANCE SHEET.

Our author goes on to investigate what rights the unions have surrendered, and what they have got out of it. He describes the Court's power to disallow union rules and to prevent amalgamations. He mentions the fact that unions must file a list of their members. These things he considers as possible disadvantages. As against these, and outweighing them by far, is the fact that Unions have not only their own authority but the backing of the court in enforcing rules and fines.

Mr. Foerender believes that the unions have shown "wisdom and foresight" in accepting the Arbitration system. They "have much to lose should they discontinue their faith in it." (p. 17). "What is the result of this meant for? The Union members? Or the Union officials? The author sees no difference between them, blandly asserting that there is no tendency "towards the formation of a high-paid, leisured class among officials." (p. 204).

The policy of the Court, he tells us "is based on the determination to uphold as far as possible, the prestige and authority of a registered organisation. AND TO REFRAIN FROM IMPAIRING THE DIGNITY AND RESPECT OF ITS OFFICIALS IN THE EYES OF MEMBERS." (p. 203—our emphasis).

Now, here is the clue which might have led the author "to investigate what effect the Australian Arbitration system has had on the structure of the unions. Let us admit at once that there have been cases where rank-and-file Unionists were victimised by the officials because they happened to disagree with their political policy. Mr. Foerender could have started from that fact and investigated the cases where this has taken place, and what sort of role the Arbitration has played in them. True, when he deals with amalgamations, he gets close to the problem. But he does not attach any importance to it. He does not even mention the case of the Balmain Ironworkers.

No, Mr. Foerender, your balance sheet won't do. It is not a question of a few legal limitations at all. What we would have liked to know is the answer to quite different issues, issues which must be dealt with in any serious study which tries to show the effect of Arbitration on Unionism.

The questions Mr. Foerender might have broached are these: Why Unions? Has Arbitration helped in fostering the growth of bureaucracy in the Unions? Has it helped in tying the Unions more closely to the State? How has the fact that many Union officials are also officials of the State reacted on the Unions? What are the chances of the rank and file member having any real say in Union affairs

today? How much pressure is there from the Unions on the Government, and how much from the Government on the Unions? Is it merely a coincidence that many of the recently appointed Conciliation Commissioners were former Union officials, or else closely connected with the ALP? What is the effect of a Labor Government on the Unions?

It is clear that important developments are taking place throughout the Trade Union movement of the world. With the increasing trend towards State Capitalism, and the general tendency for Union officials to become little more than agents of the State, Surely Mr. Foerender must have heard of the wave of unofficial strikes and lock-outs were directed both against the Government and the bureaucratic machinery are most common in countries where so-called 'left' parties are in power. Government. Will the future bring a development where the Unions, if they are to preserve any of their independence, will have to concentrate their efforts against the State, and private employers as against the State, against constituted authority as such? Or will the Unions calmly submit to Government control and direction, and accept in return a sort of glorified Labor Front?

In Australia, what has been the role of the Arbitration system in speeding the trend to State Capitalism? These are some of the questions Mr. Foerender might have raised. But he does not seem to be aware of the effects of Arbitration on the general problems of Unionism or on the development of Capitalism.

We do not wish to imply that, within the limits indicated, the first and third part of this book are not useful for reference. They are. As for the second part, dealing with the Basic Wage, it repeats a number of heavy fallacies, and is claimed that "the regimen" according to which the wage is adjusted, is "broadly typical of the goods and services demanded by the workers." (p. 70) If a cost-of-living index, which excludes, to name but a few items at random, such things as shaving gear, stamps, paper, phone calls, radio, spectacles, hospital contributions, fresh fruit, furniture, and so on, etc., can be called "typical", all we can say is that the author ought to try and live on the basic wage for a while and see how he gets on.

Mr. Foerender knows about everything there is to be known about the Arbitration system, except the things that matter to those who are most affected by it, i.e., the workers. If he could step down from the rarefied atmosphere of 'The Law' for a while and get down to brass tacks, he might yet write a book which wasn't all up in the clouds.

—Bob McKenzie.

'Nationalisation' or Socialism?

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Cuttings and Comments

NEWS FROM BRITAIN.

"I... Almost daily we receive notice via the press or the radio of more and more cuts in the amount of food and other necessities available to us. One day we are told we must have less meat per person, the next day clothing is reduced, then our tinned foods, our ration of fats, or else there must be less material for building purposes. All the principal parties, from conservative to communist are sending out the cry for more work. The miners are coming in for most of the curses and threats. Trade union leaders, both Labour and Communist are screaming at them to work longer hours and to increase output. A fuel shortage this winter will result in a reduced output in other industries and a loss of foreign trade to British capitalists. So, we must do without the necessities and comforts of life now, in order that in the future, when the foreign markets for our goods are opening, we can enjoy the relaxation that comes with unemployment and no wages to buy the necessities and comforts of life."

—From a letter by W. Waters, Overseas Secy. S.F.G.B.

II.—Company profits are rising rapidly in England. Earnings of 428 companies whose profits were published in the first quarter of the year increased from £82,623,000 to £102,331,000 before income tax paid, but after meeting the reduced Excess Profits Tax of 60 per cent. A sharp increase in ordinary dividends occurred, their cash value increasing from 549,898,000 to 684,205,000 and the average rate rose from 15 1/2 per cent. for 1946 to 22 1/2 per cent. in 1947.—("Herald" 17-9-47, first edition only).

III.—The English Chancellor has been trying to induce investors to put their money in Government bonds (so called 'gilt edged securities'). Commenting on this the confidential report of the leading financial weekly in England says "At the moment the Chancellor is still tugging the gilt edged market says that one of the main reasons is that institutional investors, who must invest about to be nationalised, home stocks about to be nationalised, home railways and electricity securities." (Copyright restrictions do not permit us to disclose which London weekly issues the confidential report.)

A DIRTY REP?

In New York, a manufacturer proudly advertised the ultimate in Flexible rubber erasers "to keep your toes apart so polish dries thoroughly without smearing." ("Time" 26-7-47).

STREAMLINED PRAYER.

"Although Eskimos live on fish and seal meat and never touch bread, the religious are obliged under pain of damnation to pray each day for their 'daily bread'. To overcome this paradoxical situation the Vicar of Christ, Pope Pius XII, has issued a

Papal Bull (Decree) for the benefit of Catholic Eskimos. In future when Eskimos recite the Lord's Prayer they will ask for their 'daily fish' instead of the mysterious 'bread'."—("News Review" London, 14-8-47).

THE HIGH COURT.

The Bank Bill is sure to be passed in Parliament and just as certainly will be challenged before the High Court. As few workers know who was appointed, the following may be of interest. There are six members, as follows:

Chief Justice Sir John Latham; Aged 70, appointed by Lyons Govt. having stepped down from leadership of Nationalist Party for Lyons.

Sir Hayden Erskine Starke; Aged 76, appointed by Hughes Nationalist Govt. in 1920.

Sir George Rich; Aged 84, on Bench since 1913. Appointed by Cook Liberal Govt.

Sir Owen Dixon; Aged 61, appointed by Bruce-Paige Govt. in 1930; Minister to Washington for Curtin Govt., 1942-44.

Dudley Williams; Aged 58, appointed by Menzies Govt. in 1940.

Edward Aloysius McTiernan; Aged 55, appointed by Scullin Labor Govt. in 1930. Only judge to dissent in recent case when Commonwealth power to alter municipal councils to battle with Cwealth Bank were challenged. Dissented in favor of Govt.

YOU AND HE

Chief Judge Drake-Brockman, of the Federal Arbitration Court, who was getting by on £57/15/ week, will now receive £77/10/. That's 14 times the basic wage.

FOOD.

"The obvious way to save food to ship to Europe would be to cut down on the tons of grain fed to beasts here. It is fed to animals so that Americans can have rare cuts of meat. ... There isn't any doubt that a great many people here eat food is colossal; yet by a paradox, the cost of food is so high that Mayor O'Dwyer warns that thousands of poor people, ill through malnutrition, are swarming the hospitals." ("Herald" New York Diary 9-10-47).

—Pete.

Reprinted without Comment.

Canadian Advice:

"WATCH MARCH OF SOCIALISM IN AUSTRALIA"

The Australian budget is received by Ottawa's leading conservative newspaper, Ottawa Journal, with a mixture of mild surprise and qualified approval.

The article attracts attention from United Kingdom to Australia to "watch Socialism on the march," and points out that "Australia, despite its so-called 'daily bread', to overcome this paradoxical situation the Vicar of Christ, Pope Pius XII, has issued a

After reviewing figures given by the Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) in his budget speech, it adds: "He has reduced tax on company profits by 14,000,000 dollars a year and sales tax by 17,000,000 dollars, and suspended, entirely the tax on gold—albeit, not a bad showing, whether for a half-socialist State or any other." The journal describes the Australian Opposition as "a group of men (Menzies) as a man with a "propensity for alarmist language."

—("Sun" 25/9/47).

OLD PAMPHLETS WANTED

The Editorial Committee urgently requires pamphlets issued by the ALP and ACP from 1920-1944. Only pamphlets dealing with Australian political subjects and Union matters are needed. If you are prepared to give, loan, or sell us such pamphlets, contact us at Box 1440-M, Melbourne

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SUBSCRIBERS.—Please Note:

We have received some complaints about the late posting of overseas papers ("Socialist Standard" and "Western Socialist"). We would draw your attention to the fact that the yearly price of 12/- for all three papers, on which most subs. are based, is calculated on the basis of the three papers being posted TOGETHER. This saves you 3/- a year in postage. If you wish to have the papers posted as they arrive, the subscription would be 15/-.

Training Stoges For The Boss

What is the real function of the Catholic Action organization, known as the "Young Christian Workers Movement"? Clearly, to dope young workers with baloney about "spiritual values," "social justice," etc., and to detract their attention from the class struggle.

This is shown by the following extract from their monthly organ "New Youth" (August 1947):

"The young Christian workers are conscious of his true dignity and importance. To the average young worker today his job is usually dull and stodgey. Often as it is just drifft into it, it does not interest him; he does not need to use any skill; he gets none of the thrill of creating things. Then too,

he feels he is 'only a worker', a paid hand, ordered about here and there. He sees tens of thousands of chaps just like himself—apparently of no particular importance, and nobody caring even what happens to them.

The Y.C.W. wants to help him to realise what a splendid place he occupies in God's scheme. God the Father, has brought him into existence, and watched over him every instant since then. God the Son shed His blood for him. God the Holy Ghost is ready to pour light and beauty into his heart. For the humblest young truck-driver or mechanic there is that glorious destiny we have sketched. . . . The young worker is to achieve his destiny simply by being a worker. . . . For God has placed him in that place that is his vocation. . . .

Well, well. This should cure many a worker who might feel like asking the boss to "pour light and beauty" into his pocket with an extra £1 a week. He won't need money, he mustn't grumble, after all "God has put him in the place that's his vocation."

It is interesting to note, as we reported in previous issues, that while the Communist Party claims to oppose Catholic Action here, their Italian comrades have quite cheerfully allied themselves with the Catholics and voted together with them in inserting anti-democratic measures in the new constitution.

F.R.

ROYAL BLESSING.

"Princess Elizabeth is no longer proud. She will be a democratic Queen. They say that if she were to vote she would vote for the Labour Party"—"Samedi Soir" (Paris) q. in "News Review" (London) 5/6/47
 "For all practical purposes the Labor Govt. in Great Britain is now possessed of powers which are equal in every way to those which were possessed by the dictatorships in Axis countries before the recent world war."—Labor Party Senator, Don Cameron, in "Labor Call" 28/8/47.

WHO'S DISARMING?

The hoary old story is still being told how after the First World War, the "victors" embarked on a policy of disarmament while everybody else armed. It wasn't true, of course—between 1925 and 1933 (before Germany was rearming), expenditure on arms rose from 3522,000,000 gold dollars at par to 4,399,000,000 dollars (League of Nations Armaments Year Book for 1934).

Well, this time, Germany and Japan are spending nothing on arms. But military experts of the New York "Times", Hanson Baldwin, has collected figures which show that the world (not including Germany and Japan) is spending £3,126 million more on arms than it did in 1938, that the total arms bill of 40 nations is at least £8,567,000,000, and that probably more men are in uniform now than in 1938 (the estimate is 19,000,000).

Remember those figures when someone tries to tell you, that the world is drifting into war because the "victors" disarmed.

—"Peacemaker" June, 47.

§ § §

SWEDEN.

Sweden is often cracked up as a country which has abolished poverty without touching Capitalism, has found a "middle way".

Now have a look at the latest income tax figures. "Of 3,075,746 people who have to pay taxes, 44% get over 10000 kroner (about £900) and 1% gets over 20,000 kroner. On the other hand there are 250,000 people with yearly incomes of less than 1000 kroner (£90). Average wage of an unskilled worker in the building industry is about 3,200 kroner per year (£290). (Swedish correspondent in "Industrial Worker" Chicago, 22/2/47).

Housing? Nearly 50% of Swedish houses are one-room dwellings with no central heating, and nearly two thirds have no baths. (Elizabeth Denby: "Europe re-housed" 1938, p. 56).

Looks as if the centre of gravity in the "middle way" isn't QUITE in the centre!

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S.P.A.

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1. 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

S.P.N.Z.

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 to muster under their banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought 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.

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