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25 Years
of the
Australian
Communist
Party



by

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VOTE I
FREDA BROWN

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25 Years of the Australian Communist Party

Speech delivered at the 14th Congress of the Australian Communist Party, held in the Sydney Town Hall, August 9-12, by

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This is a very successful Congress, and we certainly live in a period of great change.

The great changes in the alignment of class forces internationally which took place in the course of the war against fascism and which will continue into the peace as humanity struggles forward towards its liberation, find their reflection here in our own country.

It is because of these great changes that this Congress is assembled to lay down the policy, the line of march to be pursued by our Party and the labor movement in the immediate period now before us.

Our problem here in Australia is to correctly estimate international and national developments, trends and perspectives, to find in the conditions of our country, State, industry, locality and job, the answer to each immediate practical problem as it arises, and to organise the masses and lead them to struggle for its solution. To do this, so that step by step we will be able to grasp the vital links in the chain of development now and in the period that lies ahead.

No matter how bright the perspectives, these perspectives can never be realised without the most consistent and intense struggle against all who at the given time stand in the way of the next step towards progress. Today our Party stands on the threshold of new endeavors, of new accomplishments. Because we live

in that period of history when the old order is passing, because our Party wields the influences it does, because our Party holds the answer to the problem of our people, our responsibility grows each day.

To make the most of the bright perspectives that are opening up it is necessary, vitally urgent that the Communists everywhere come to a much deeper understanding of the basic teachings of Communism and be for ever mindful of the **history, struggle and tradition** established by our Party during the 25 years of its embattled and glorious existence.

To understand this history, struggle and tradition of our Party in all its intimate connections with the growth and decay of capitalist society in Australia, in relation to the growth of the labor movement; to understand its social and historic significance; to see our Party as the living flexible instrument, which, because of its **scientific theory and conscious will**, is able to transform the struggle of the labor movement from **blind, spontaneous** struggle, with no vision beyond the limitation of capitalism itself, into **conscious, enlightened struggle** for the establishment of a Socialist classless society; and furthermore to see Australian developments in their correct relationship to world developments, trends and perspectives and above all in the light of the conscious world struggle for the liberation of mankind. . .

To learn the rich truths of this history, to learn to avoid past error and weakness, to bring out in the searching light of Marxism all that is useful, all that has enriched and ennobled the work of the Leninist Party that has grown here on Australian soil, and to use the understanding and the tremendous power it gives in the battle of today and tomorrow . . .

There are in our Party today thousands of new members who are but faintly aware of these rich lessons and tomorrow there will be thousands more who will know even less of the history and tradition of our Party unless a great effort is made to arm them with understanding.

The central point of our 25th Anniversary Campaign is to bring out the lessons, the great revealing truth of the history of our labor movement and of our Party so that old and new alike will be fortified, armed with the weapons necessary to improve the struggle around the immediate program and to connect up scientific socialism with the life and struggle of the labor movement and the Australian people.

LIBERAL LABOR PARTY.

Capitalist society in Australia did not evolve from a previously existing society here on this soil. Therefore the Australian nation of today has no history, no tradition of its own that goes back beyond capitalism.

As capitalism developed, the Trades Unions came into being in the battle of the working class in the fight for a better life.

While developing many specifically Australian characteristics it was inevitable, because of its lack of scientific socialist theory, that the dominant political characteristics of the Australian labor movement were limited by the limitations of the ideological concepts of capitalism itself.

The first great political weapon thrown up by the Australian working class in its struggle against capitalism was, and remains today, a liberal bourgeois Labor Party. It was and is today a reformist party.

It followed that the gulf between the independent class interests and needs of the working class, which constituted the mass of the supporters of the A.L.P., and the reformist liberal bourgeoisie concepts and policy of its leaders would become greater as capitalism developed, as the working class became stronger, as the class issues became more clear cut and demanded a decision more definite and far reaching than anything the A.L.P. could produce.

The logic of history demands and makes inevitable that the policy of the reformist bourgeois A.L.P. wedded

as it is to capitalism, make way for a revolutionary working class policy that will challenge and overthrow capitalism, and replace it by a scientific Socialist order of Society.

Leading up to and during the last war, the class issues in Australia, reflecting the imperialist world contradictions, became sharper than before. The I.W.W. based on the erroneous concepts of syndicalism, but preaching a strong anti-war and anti-capitalist policy exercised a big influence on the working class, the anti-conscription issues and the 1917 general strike.

These struggles and many others reflected the strivings of the Australian working class for an independent policy. But the I.W.W., because of its lack of political theory and its sectarianism, was not, and could not be the answer.

The I.W.W. was unable to withstand the assault of capital and, when outlawed, finished as a force of any consequence, whilst the various socialist groupings remained isolated from the mass movement, even in the days of the world shaking events towards the conclusion of and immediately after the last war.

The demand of history, of the laws of social evolution had not been answered. This was the situation when the Communist Party was formed. The Communist Party constituted the answer to this demand.

In the course of the first Imperialist World War the Labor and Socialist Parties of all countries, other than Russia, like the A.L.P. marched with the imperialists of their own countries against the interests of the working class and the mass of the people.

But in old Czarist Russia a Party of a new type had been created—a Party trained and led by Lenin, who developed and applied Marxism in the period of imperialism and the proletarian revolution.

In the course of the first world war, the Bolshevik Party broke through the world chain of imperialist

dominion. Casting the Czar from his throne and the capitalists from power, for the first time in history the working class took power into their own hands and succeeded in carrying into effect the logic of the independent policy of the working class — the principles of Scientific Socialism.

The difference between the policy of the Bolshevik Party and that of the Second International was, in essence, the difference between the interests and needs of the Australian working class and the bourgeois policy of the Australian Labor Party.

These great events in Russia could not but have profound effects throughout the capitalist and colonial world. Old and new fighters alike were inspired. The star that had risen on the soil of old Czarist Russia was the herald announcing the dawn of the new world—free from poverty and want—free from exploitation of man by man.

Such a challenge to the old order called the sons and daughters of the working class, of the colonial peoples and all who were oppressed by capitalism to battle for the liberation of mankind and to do this along scientific lines.

It was in this world situation that the Australian Communist Party was founded.

Founded in the period of the revolutionary upsurge, the Party commenced its manysided battle. First was the struggle for clarity on the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism. For the new proletarian Party, surrounded as it was by bourgeois society and a labor movement sodden with bourgeois concepts, traditions and methods of struggle, had to fight for the new understanding, new methods of work and to establish the new revolutionary tradition.

From this period developed that of the temporary stabilisation of capitalism. This was a period when reformist and bourgeois illusions exercised powerful influence in the labor movement. Even some who had

formerly been prominent deserted the Party in this period.

It is necessary for us all to study this period well. The illusions developed at that time were in many respects similar to the present day Browderite illusions. What were the toy balloons of illusion put forward by the reformists at that time? Evolution through joint stock companies; ever increasing living standards; capitalism moving towards paradise on earth; no need to struggle, just sitting down and marvelling at the marvels of modern capitalist society.

How drastically spoke the logic of history later on in the form of the economic crisis.

But the Party knew better: the task was to prepare the working class to struggle independently against capitalism and against reformist illusions about capitalism. The Party struggled for a correct policy. But the then leadership was holding back the masses from this struggle, preventing the Party from connecting up with the masses.

Then, in 1929, came the victory of the Party led by L. L. Sharkey and J. B. Miles, supported by many others. The victory over the right wing elements in the leadership of the Party at that time, represented the victory of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine over reformism that had soaked into or had never been wrung out of our Party.

We owe a great debt to L. L. Sharkey, that far-
visioned man, and to J. B. Miles, whose political and practical ability has left such an imprint on our Australian Communist Party.

During the period of the economic crisis, the Party under the new Leninist leadership commenced to connect up with the mass movement—great battles were fought, battles against reformism, Langism, dole dumps and the Premiers' Plan. In the course of this struggle there took place a rapid growth of the Party.

Then came the period when our slogan was: "Face to the Factories"—and despite all the difficulties, all our inexperience, our Party carried out a good job. It was the work done under that slogan that laid the real basis for the very wide connections and influence we hold today in the Australian Trade Union Movement, and among the mass of the working class.

Then opened the period of struggle against fascism and imperialist war.

Comrades will remember the rise to power of fascism in Germany—what a blow this was to the international working class—the defeat of the once powerful German labor movement.

You will remember how we were inspired by the stand taken by Dimitrov at the Leipzig Fire Trial—how he stood like a hero of the Greek legends, defending our cause. But unlike the heroes of the legends of ancient Greece, he was not born an immortal, neither had he been kissed by an immortal. No, comrades, he was the son of the working class. He had been kissed only by the light of Marxism and a great love for humanity.

How well, how gloriously he upheld the banner of Communism, of the independent political concepts and hopes of the working class of Europe, and of the whole world, in the very den of the fascist beasts.

How inspiring his stand, how unlike the wretched position occupied by the reformist leaders of the Second International.

In this period our Party continued to advance and was greatly assisted by the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International. Our Party extended its influence among the working class and other sections of the Australian people.

There was a long struggle for the defeat of the Lyons' and later the Menzies' Government; our leadership of strike struggle; our policy in relation to Abyssinia,

Spain, the occupation of Austria, and to China, no war materials to Japan, Czechoslovakia.

Life has substantiated the policy of the Third International and of our own Party.

AGAINST THE STREAM

Then came the victory of fascism and appeasement at Munich. How dark those days. How inspiring the position of the U.S.S.R., Communism and the progressive forces throughout the world.

What were our main problems during those years? Our main problem was to connect up with the masses, to explain the character of fascism, to support bourgeois democracy with all its rottenness against the monster of fascism. To carry into effect the policy of the united front of the working class against fascism and the imperialist war. To overcome sectarianism — narrowness — which was the main obstacle in broadening out the work of the Party. To do this whilst retaining correct balance, whilst dealing heavy blows at the weakness of reforms and maintaining the independent position of the working class—maintaining principle without which all would be lost.

Then came the second world war which commenced as an imperialist war. We fought against the policy of the ruling class in the war, fought to change the policy and character of the war. Despite the difficulties, our Party did a valiant job. They were stirring days when we fought against the stream. They were very dark days for humanity, especially when France fell and all continental Europe outside the Soviet Union went under the iron heel of fascism, when Britain staggered like a punch drunk pug, between the pathway that France had taken and a desperate struggle for independence. The hopes of Hitler and world reaction were high.

Our Party was declared illegal—why? Because we would not surrender principles, the reaction sought to

cut off our hands, to destroy the ability of the Party to influence the masses. No doubt they were encouraged by their experience of the I.W.W. during the last war. Our Party was not the I.W.W. Our Party was, and is, a Leninist Party.

The aim of reaction failed. Our Party preserved its organisation. It reached the masses by its propaganda through the illegal press and the heroic work in the factories and among the people.

Again, despite our inexperience, our Party, under the leadership of the Central Committee, learned to combine legal with illegal work. Communist theory and patient practical work defeated the aims of reaction which sought to destroy the Party and the independent policy, initiative and struggle of the working class.

The illegal period wrote new pages in the history of our Party which became steeled by this experience. A few could not take it. A very few fell by the wayside, they thought first of their own hides, they turned their backs on Marxism, on the hopes and aspirations of humanity, on Australia's future.

The great majority stood the test. How well they carried out the direction of the illegal Centres, what wonderful initiative they displayed, how we were all encouraged by the Soviet Union and the Communists of other lands.

Our Party emerged from the illegal period stronger than ever before. When legality was gained our Party was more than four times stronger than at the beginning of this period; only in the struggle does our Party grow. Should ever our Party cease to struggle for the independent interests of the working class, our Party should die.

Time will not permit me to deal at all fully with the period of the war after Hitler's hordes struck at the land of Socialism, or about the great realignment of class forces that took place in the course of the great struggle which culminated in the victory of democracy over fascism in Europe. But you will remember how victory

came at last after years of struggle for national and international unity against fascism, how the world was inspired by the struggle of the Soviet Union, how unity in the early days grew stronger and stronger as time went on, how the masses responded, how life substantiated our policy down the years, our faith in humanity, our faith in Marxism and the laws of social evolution.

In view of the attacks that are being made upon Communism today, it is well to call to mind the proud boasting of he who was once the spokesman of world reaction. How well I remember the voice of Hitler coming over the air years ago when I was still in the canefields. What did he say on that May Day over 10 years ago? He said: "If Germany is to live, Communism must die. The Marxist scum must be swept from the face of the earth." How powerful he was then, how the reaction throughout the world thrilled to his words. How fully they agreed with him.

But the logic of history spoke louder than Hitler. Yes, Comrades, today 10 years after he spoke, Hitler and his super-brutes are no more. The impact of the logic of history telescoped their tents; they have passed, passed to the darkness, to join the Gods of the German mythology who failed them in their hour of trial.

But what of Communism?

INTO DAWN OF NEW WORLD

Communism lives, more powerful than ever before, triumphant, leading the working class and all humanity into the radiant dawn of the new world.

When the representatives of finance capital scream against Communism and progress, when the Labor Party right wing slander us and the Trotskyists rave, when the Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, with their medieval philosophical, economic and political concepts attack us, do not ever take them cheaply, let us fight back with everything we have, but remember that like Hitler their tents will be telescoped too.

This year witnesses the 25th Anniversary of the foundation of the Australian Communist Party.

Coming together on the basis of their own experience in the labor movement and stimulated by the great Socialist Revolution in Russia, those courageous men and women, by their decision to form the Party, raised here in this, our Southern Land, the banner of scientific socialism.

In fulfilling this great need of the Australian labor movement they performed a noble task. The history of our Party, of our country and of the world since that time amply demonstrates the necessity and the wisdom of the path taken by them on that historic occasion.

Our Party has travelled a long way during the 25 years since its foundation. From a very small beginning, through many difficulties, the Communist Party has become a nation-wide Party. Not nation-wide only because of the geographical situation of its organisation, but nation-wide because, while based upon the working class, in its ranks are to be found the most courageous, clear sighted thinkers and doers from all sections of the progressive people.

The best fighters of the industrial, clerical and rural workers, fine men and women from the ranks of the youth and soldiers and the professions, from the fields of science, art, medicine and literature, and an ever growing number of farmers, are today united in the ranks of our Leninist Party.

With this unity of the toilers of hand and brain expressed in our Party today—which after all is yet but the herald of the mightier Party which is to come—what sane person could believe other than that scientific socialism is firmly implanted in our Australian soil?

This Congress and what it represents is itself a glowing tribute to the founders of our Party, to all those sons and daughters of our people, who during the years of its life and struggle have learned to love what our

Party stands for and to serve it so nobly. This Congress is above all a tribute to the ever wondrous and revealing historical and scientific truth of Marxism, or to use the keen edged, far-famed words that Duclos re-emphasised so recently—a tribute to “the victorious Marxist-Leninist doctrine.”

The nightmare of fascism is passing. Over the war torn world, over the stricken fields, the desolated cities, over the bodies of millions of men, women and children slaughtered by fascism, the new world that can be—that will be—can be seen.

The struggles of the glorious Soviet Union, of the new democracies in Europe, of the great progressive movements in Britain, America and elsewhere and the revolutionary movements of the colonial peoples, led and assisted by the valiant work of the Communist Parties, are all merging now.

Here in Australia our Communist Party has a history, a background of struggle; it has established glorious battle traditions. We must study it well: we must be for ever mindful of the fundamental politics of the concepts of Communism, which represents the independent position of the working class, and of the creation of one Party of the working class for Socialism.

If we do this, then we can guarantee that our Party, through the pathway put forward in the Draft Resolution before Congress, will be able to march at the head of the working class and the people of this, our Southern Land, together with all humanity into the dawn of the real beginning of human history.

Other speeches in this Congress
series are:

- No. 1.—Unite for Post-War Progress,
by J. Blake.
- No. 2.—Results of the Victory over
Fascism, by L. L. Sharkey.
- No. 3.—Jobs, Freedom, Progress, by
J. B. Miles.
- No. 4.—Our Tasks in the Federal
Elections, by R. Dixon.
- No. 6.—Arts, Science and Commun-
ism, by L. H. Gould.
- No. 7.—Congress Resolution.

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