

SOCIALIST COMMENT

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ONE PENNY

"There Will be Many Turns" WANT A HOUSE

"We must understand that the road which lies ahead of us is by no means a straight road. There will be many turns, bends and difficult situations that we shall have to tackle."—Mr. J. D. Blake, Victorian Secretary, Australian Communist Party, in a speech to their 1947 State Conference, in "The Communist Way Forward" p. 25.

Another knot has been tied in the "line" of the local followers of Stalin. By accident, it coincides with that propounded by Moscow Historian I. M. Lenin at the beginning of May. "The Soviet Union does not constitute a threat to the British Empire. . . . All the screaming, especially by the Americans, about the Soviet threat to the Empire is merely an excuse for the Americans to penetrate into the Empire. . . . It is not the Soviet Union but the US which is threatening to destroy the British Empire's political coherence and economic welfare."—"Time" 16/6.

This new twist was echoed by the recent Empire Conference of the Communist Parties in London. It may be summed up with: "For God, King and Country—Long Live British Imperialism—Down with Uncle Sam, the enslaver!" The motive is obviously to try and weaken the alliance between the British and American capitalists.

The Australian delegate, Mr. J. C. Henry, gave his report to the local Central Committee—it was endorsed without dissent. This is what now has to be the main task of the Australian workers: "Australia's main task today was to struggle against economic penetration by American monopolists. To wage this fight there should be a National Front (which) should include workers, farmers, town middle class people AND PATRIOTIC ELEMENTS AMONG THE CAPITALIST CLASS IN AUSTRALIA."—"Tribune" 20/6—our emphasis.

The July issue of the "Communist Review" carries details of the new policy. There is perhaps a need to review in some respects the whole question of the colonial struggle. . . . Renewed offers of unity are to be made to the ALP 'progressives' for "they will certainly need friends and allies from the Communist Party and as their aims and our on these major, broad questions will be very close, similar in fact, to preserve the independence of our country and so on, even if we have different ideas about going about it, this lays the basis for much more bigger developments along the lines of unity than perhaps have occurred in the past."

In practice, the switch has expressed itself in a whirlwind campaign for imperial preference amongst farmers, and in the sudden discovery that people in Britain are "worn, tired and lacking in energy". (Guardian 27/6) Food parcels are to be sent.

Which political party is most closely connected with British Capital? Surely not the ALP which is more nationalistic and has isolationist trends. No, the "patriotic elements amongst the capitalist class" will be found in the LIBERAL PARTY.

Compare, for instance, the above from the Salinist press with an extract from Mr. Menzies' policy speech declaring last year: "The Liberal Party's foreign policy was: A cohesive British Empire, in which there were not only occasional conferences on the Ministerial level, but also permanent machinery for joint political, military and economic arrangements. . . ." ("Age" August 21, 1946).

Well? Can you see any difference? Does not the Communist Party now stand for a "cohesive British Empire", "Empire Preference" and "Defence"?

Only two months ago—Dr. Evatt was denounced by the "Guardian" as a "warmonger" who was threatening the Nation's liberty. Today, there are signs that Australian and American capitalist interests are beginning to clash over Japan. Will Evatt now become a "patriotic savour"?

Truly, complications lie ahead, boys. It won't all be so easy. If you're really going to hunt round for "patriots" you'll have to include Mr. Menzies (remember—he was "Pig Iron Bob"), Mr. Casey (remember—he was "The Tiger of Bengal") and maybe even little Jo Abbot.

Of course, a party that could have a United Front with the Nazis on two occasions in Germany, won't find it very hard to have, if necessary, a United Front with the Liberals.

But, beware, boys—you'll have to think up some clever slogans to put this one over. There will be many turns, bends and difficult situations you'll have to tackle.

R.Y.

"For the proletariat to be strong enough on the day of decision, it is necessary, and this view Marx and I have upheld since 1847, that it should form its own party, separated from all others and opposed to them, a class-conscious class party."

—Frederick Engels (December 18th, 1899).

HOUSING—Continued.

But perhaps the worker might be able to get a job in Canberra, the planned garden city, where everything's lovely. But hold on—we read. Considering its age and the opportunity it had to avoid the mistakes made elsewhere, Canberra probably possesses the most creditable collection of shanty settlements that could be found anywhere." ("Herald" 4/7).

Over 70 years ago, the co-founder of scientific Socialism, Frederick Engels, wrote a book "The Housing Question" in which he said: "The housing question (under Capitalism) is no accident; it is a necessary institution and it can be abolished together with all its social order, only if the whole social order from which it springs is fundamentally refashioned."

That was a long while ago—but it's still true.

PRIM AND PROPER**Clerks and Socialism**

Snobbery is not confined to the capitalist class—it exists within the ranks of the workers. The thousands of young men and women who 'yearn' in office and store each day, and at the end of a week receive a salary instead of getting a wage, tend to look upon themselves as a cut above the "ordinary" worker. Their jobs are relatively clean. The badge of their servitude is the blue suit with which many of them are too proud yet into whose choice poses many a moment—for it is practically the only thing by which they can express their personality.

On the other hand, the factory worker often pretends to look down on the swivel chair artist—but just as often secretly envies them and imagines their dress no less in train or train, people might think he has a job in the city.

The relative backwardness of clerical workers has many causes—a clerk's job gives an illusion of superiority not only because it usually starts at nine instead of eight and because he can pretend to stroll unconcernedly through the city between one and two, but also because his daily contact is mainly with the management of the firm, and less with the "hands." Add to this that the job requires training in Business and Night schools where the "white collar complex" is fostered for all its worth, and you won't be surprised at the low level of class consciousness which exists.

CLERKS UNION.

From an organization counting the members in hundreds in 1940, the Federated Clerks' Union has blossomed into one having 50,000 members in 1946. The influx came mostly from temporary Government departments set up to conduct the recent slaughter more efficiently. Thus the growth has not been natural, it is not the case that the clerical class suddenly clamoured for Unionism.

but rather that the Government itself encouraged the move. As the industrial has been to an extent artificial, it has not been reflected in the great spurts of militancy. But, all the same, it has brought in thousands into contact with Trade Unionism, and has also spread to non-government enterprises. It cannot be said to have the effect on the general outlook of clerical workers.

The Union is divided into many sections—there are Brewery Clerks, Shipping Clerks, Oil, and Wool Clerks, etc., all in separate divisions. There is also a General Division, containing a large proportion of members, brought together by the manager of the Stalwarts and their fellow travellers and the equally dirty intrigues of the Catholic Actionists, the clerical worker is somewhat bewildered. On the whole, the Stalwarts have the bulk of the support.

Award Rate, for adult male clerks, is £6/8/- per week, for a 42 hour week of 51 days, with a fortnight's leave. The rate is £1 above the current Basic wage. Considering the fact that clerks have to spend more money than a factory worker on clothes, to preserve what is known as a "neat appearance" the rate is comparatively poor.

All the above, plus the nature of the work, which is often scattered, and the often scattered, make strike action difficult, and that's the main reason why their wages are low. Bosses don't fork out an extra pound week just to look at a new natty-pin-stripe.

ROSY FUTURE.

Many firms of the bigger type specialise in superannuation schemes. When the "hands" go on strike, clerks are forced into a position where they either have to scab, or else risk losing superannuation. In their jobs often look secure and they derive considerable self-satisfaction through "handling thousands of pounds"—even though their pay envelope doesn't increase.

While on the one hand the increased bureaucratization of Capitalism would lead to a demand for more clerical labour, on the other hand clerks are faced with the prospect of increased mechanisation and the employment of junior girls at lower rates. To give but one example: The Patents Office has installed machines which search patents at the rate of 24,000 an hour, doing in 15 minutes work which occupied human searchers for two or three days. "Herald" 5/7.

Looking at the cost of employing a sales clerk here, compared with buying a slot machine, it does not seem so impossible that before long this will be a country of 'automat' shops." ("Age" 16)

That's only the beginning. Compared with factory, the mechanisation of offices is but in its infancy. What's happened to the factory worker is also going to happen to the clerical worker: machinery will dis-

place skill. The employment of young girls will increase.

"The operation of an office as in a factory. Only those who have to operate a calculating machine or some other piece of machinery will do the pore over columns of figures all day, can realise that an office job is just as lousy as a factory job—in spite of the white collar.

The next depression, when thousands of temporary public servants will roam the streets, will provide a test. It will show whether clerical workers have learnt anything from their daily contacts with capitalism—and how much.

JAMES BAINES.

SLAVE LABOR

"Forced Labor has become a post-war institution in many lands. In Europe alone it has been estimated that nearly one third of all productive work is now being done by forced labor. France continues to hold hundreds of thousands of war prisoners, well over 300,000 in all held in Great Britain. How many Poland holds no one knows. The cry of the Czech Government that it is short of labor cannot be taken as the word of a 'workshop' of the Hungarians exiled into Sudentland to work as slave laborers. Nor can the present Czech regime explain away the 1,000,000 treatment of over 1,000,000 Sudetens.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is the land which calls itself 'socialist', the Government of which parades as a 'workers' republic' in the world, and biggest slave centre on earth today, it is from Soviet Russia that the tidal wave of labor enslavement has swept westward. In the Kremlin domain there are millions of Soviet citizens doomed to slave labor camps merely because they are suspected or convicted or disapproving or disorganised in their attitude of policy of the ruling group. Under the whip of the N.K.V.D. or M.V.D. (Russian Secret Police) and the prodding of Soviet bayonets, millions of Austrians, Estonians, Hungarians, Germans, Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles, Ukrainians, Crimeans, Japanese and Rumanians, men and women, civilian and military alike—are now being used as slave laborers.

Papuan and New Guineans are kept in slavery for wealthy Australian planters. In a recent statement by the American Federation of Labor, in "International Free Trade Union News" March 1947:

"Vast numbers of Japanese now doing forced work in China and other Eastern countries. Italians who are laboring in France and North Africa, swell the total of post-war slaves." ("Herald" 5/7).

This is one of the results of the second war "for democracy"—forced labor, slavery has become one of the "Four Freedoms." At the Nuremberg trials, the same charges against British, French and Russian—condemned to death Fritz Sauckel, director of the Nazis forced labor camps for eastern Europe. Allied Governments are doing now.

Cuttings and Comments**DEMOCRACY VICTORIOUS**

"Nothing may be published in London or Germany, and are likely to spread rumours aimed at disrupting unity amongst the allies or which causes distrust and a hostile attitude of the German people towards any of the occupying powers."—"New Statesman" England 2/9/3.

"A new city order makes Germans spreading rumours of the immense power will be between the US and Russia liable to arrest. . . . The order is designed to stifle enemies of the new democratic Germany."—"Herald" 17/6.

"There is no room in Germany for so-called unpatriotic people. No one has the right to exclude himself from co-operation."—"Neues Deutschland" Central Organ of the "Socialist Unity Party" Berlin, 25/12/46.

"General Clay announced that the Soviet-sponsored Socialist Unity Party which is an amalgamation of Social Democrats and Communists, would be banned in Germany."—"Age" 19/6.

ROCKET BILL.

The Bill "for the defence of approved defence projects" which was passed on June 6th, has now become law. It provides for fines up to £5000 and 12 months jail for any one who boycotts, threatens to boycott or by speech or writing advocates or encourages the obstruction of any approved defence project. The "Rocket Range" is, up to now, the only project which has been declared "approved" under the scheme. The Minister has claimed that anything at all even remotely connected with defence could be brought under this act. Others have denied this.

It is interesting to note that this bill was passed at 3.30 in the morning in the end of session rush. According to Mrs. Blackburn, the only member who opposed the bill, no quorum of members was awake, "most were sound asleep in nice, white, Government-issue blankets, and one had to be awakened because his snoring was interrupting proceedings."—"Herald" 27/6.

It is foolish to either dismiss this measure as harmless or to claim that it has brought Fascism to Australia. With the wording of it left very vague, everything will depend on its administration. However, even from the point of view of the present Labor Govt. it is something of a puzzle to know why the bill was passed, since, for years, there has been on the statute books a "Crimes Act" which gives much the same powers as this bill.

By the way, the Labor Party is committed to "Amend Crimes Act" by repealing sections relating to "political or industrial offences" (Constitution of the ALP page 73, Section 10.) Maybe they ought to read their own program from time to time. . . .

"The bulk of the wage-pegging regulations have already been lifted, thanks to the long series of strikes which all included this demand. The remainder of the regulations are likely to go by August. Workers who think

of this as the beginning of the "Golden Age" might do well to read these words:

"Following representations from several quarters, including the A.C.T.U., the Government has believed to had adopted the view that the various wage tribunals and courts can be relied upon to give full weight to the needs of workers, and that wage increases."—"Age" 27/6, DIS-UNO.

"It is too bad about the United Nations, but it seems to be starting just about where the League of Nations left off. It is becoming here the butt of jokes and jocularities, a comedian's stand-by, a big expensive do-nothing organisation, not of this world, nor of any other."—"New York Daily Herald" 26/6.

LITTLE PEOPLE

"Hollywood authorities . . . were unanimously approving of Miss de Havilland's speech of acknowledgment for this year's Oscar when in passing she referred to the fact that without the 'help of the folks behind the scenes' her triumph would never have been possible. For, they said, without the good will of Hollywood's vast lobby of working people, the men and women in the wardrobe department, the hat dressers, the men on the catwalk sixty feet above the set handling the all-important lights, the make-up men, the script girl, the assistant, the assistant cameraman, NO star, male or female, can reach the very top of the tree."—"Herald" Film Critic 28/6.

TRAVEL

"Stand up those who have never been to the Zoo?" said the teacher, and a quarter of the class stood up. The children were six and seven-year olds in the second grade of Albert Street, Brunswick, State School. The Zoo is about 10 minutes' walk away. "Stand up all those who have never been to the beach." About a third were on their feet. "Has he never been to the city?"—"Herald" 17/6.

VATICAN'S ALLY.

Readers will remember that we published evidence (April and June) of the alliance between Italian Stalinists and neo-Fascists which led to the inclusion of the Lateran treaty in the new Italian constitution. Immediately afterwards, the new friends of the pope launched a vain attempt in Southern Italy and Sicily where Catholic influence is decisive.

In Pietro's electoral campaign, the Stalinists plastered the country-side with posters written in dialect misquoting a local pope which reads: "PEOPLE'S BLOC: GOOD'S BLOC: JEHS' WILL ASCEND TO SCARE ALL TYRANTS WITH JOY IN HIS HEART AND HIS FIST CLENCHED."

With thelogan, the Stalinist people's "People's Bloc" obtained the largest number of votes—30 per cent. ("Freedom" London, May 3rd, and "Age" 17/6.) According to the Rome correspondent of the English "Manchester

Guardian" (22/4/47): "Dogmatic Communist are certainly amongst the staunchest allies of the Vatican in this country, to say though not necessarily tomorrow."

While we are on the election posters of the glorious "Comrades" it might be noted that reports that in France they are concentrating on the farmers with election posters describing themselves as "the most dogged defender of private property." (Paris Letter in "Partisan Review" New York, May-June 47).

NASTY MINDS

"The trouble is that the Liberal Party is such an example of true democratic control and liberty that look that suspicious-minded people feel that it is too good to be true." Mr. Anderson, Vice-President of the Liberal Party "Age" 30/6.

"This scribble, somewhat dazed by headlines about 'flying saucers' and recalling that people are fooled every day in the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the ideas they absorb, was beginning to be gloomy. Mr. Anderson made him feel more cheerful. . . . till he read the next three items."—"Age" 1/7.

CHEER UP—IT'S COMING!

"A warning that an atomic war might break out within 8 years was given today by the American Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists. The United Nations had failed to find an effective safeguard against an atomic war. . . . The committee has jockeyed in the negotiations trying to place itself in the most advantageous position to win the next war."—"Age" 1/7.

"The Prime Minister (Mr. Chifley) today issued a warning that there were already indications of an economic recession in a number of countries."—"Herald" 29/6.

"What has happened to Mr. Chifley's 'Golden Age'?" ("Australia" was entering a golden age if the right legislation and economy were put into effect. . . . Mr. Chifley, "Labor Call" 8/4/6).—Where are the pre-election promises that under a Labor Government there would be no depression?—"Never again" 9/4/6.

Could it be that this paper was right after all when it said: "We be unable to avoid the next depression. . . . Basically, the victory of the Labor Party represents a further step in the direction of State Capitalism, a vain attempt to smooth out the worst features of Capitalism and to tie the working class ever more firmly to the exploiters."—"Socialist Comment" 10/11/46.

What do you think? H.H.

DEBATE

"Can the Liberals Solve the Housing Problem?"

YES: Mr. L. Hamilton, M.L.A. NO: C. Sanders (SPA).

Watch "Age" on Saturdays, "Meetings" Column, for date and place.

RUSSIA'S RATIONS

One of the most frequent arguments used by apologists for Russian State Capitalism, and for the low standard of living for the workers under that system is that "it's due to the war." It is true that the war brought untold devastation to the Russian masses. But how are the existing goods being distributed?

An article in "Internationalisme" monthly organ of the "Cauche Communiste de France" for March 1947 gives information on rationing, taken from the journal published by the Russian Embassy in France, "Journal of Soviet Economy" (Cahiers de l'Economie Sovietique).

All receivers of rations are divided into six classes: 1, Non-Workers (unable to work, invalids); 2, Non-Workers (able to work—teachers, etc.); 3, Children (up to 8 years of age); 4, Employees; 5, Ex-Workers (who were formerly ordinary workers); 6, Ex-Workers (former shock-brigadiers—pace setters).

Class 6 gets the highest ration. But in addition to these normal cards, "there are special ones, called "B" cards and "Limited Cards" given to certain persons — THE SOCIAL ELITE—AND WHICH THEY RECEIVE IN ADDITION TO THE CLASS SIX CARDS".

These cards, for the privileged only, include practically all articles absent from the ordinary ones — such as white bread, flour, biscuits, eggs, toilet soap, cigarettes, etc.

"Internationalisme" comments that while in France (and, may we add, in all other capitalist countries) the capitalists can largely disregard rationing, no other country in the world has such a system which so openly reveals the privileges of the rulers. In addition, those with money can buy on the Russian "free" i.e. black, market.

F.R.

FARES PLEASE!

Did you know that the length of the daily journey to work has been increasing. In 1939 45 per cent. of train travellers journeyed over six miles per day, and from work.

Travelling time increases the work-

ing day. At least 20 per cent. of workers have to travel for more than 40 minutes each day.

Average weekly cost for fares to and from work, in Melbourne, is 7/1 per week. Percentage are: 29 per cent pay no fares; 6.3 per cent pay under 3/-; 14.2 per cent pay from 3/- to 4/11; 21.8 pay from 5/- to 6/11; 9.5 per cent pay from 7/- to 8/11; 7.1 per cent pay from 9/- to 10/11; and 12 per cent pay over 11/-.

Percentage of income spent on fares for work by fare-paying families, leaving out incomes of £10 and over, ranges from 3.4 per cent to 7 per cent—the average is 4.2 per cent. Adds up, doesn't it?

—Facts from: "Travelling to Work" by D. Cochrane in "Economic Record" Journal of the Economic Society of A. and N.Z., December 1946.

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The Socialist Parties of Australia and New Zealand hold:

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

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.

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