

Treasurer, and who let the bank in for over £300,000. The directors—themselves politicians—paid dividends out of capital and bolstered up the concern as long as they could—finally obtaining from the Government the boon of converting two millions or so of deposit into debentures for 30 years fixed term at low interest. It all proved in vain, as the crash in Victoria shortly afterwards brought down the Queensland National Bank with the rest (all the banks through Australia stopped with only three exceptions). Thus Queensland is now in the hands, not of a rich, independent squirarchy or capitalist class, but of a gang of ruined financiers, some living on allowances from their creditors, others hanging on to over-mortgaged properties, waiting for a rise of values, others again acting as agents for the banks and foreign debenture holders. We were told that the Legislative Council, intended to represent wealth, had not now £20,000 a year among the whole thirty-six of them. (This is not true, as Tyson, the only millionaire is among them, and there are two or three more with a few thousands a year. But it is true of thirty out of the thirty-six.)

In short, in Queensland one finds at every turn, a most peculiar reminiscence of the bad manners, sullen insolence, and graspingness of the “man in possession.”

We spent some time with the Labour Party (21 members out of 72 in the Legislative Assembly). This party began practically on the collapse of the great strikes of 1890-1 which made the workmen turn from Trade Unionism to political action. Unfortunately, this coincided with the widespread influence of William Lane, a native born Australian, who took on a sort of Owenite Socialism which, in an extreme and impracticable form, was made the programme of the new party. [BW] Discouraged by the failure of the “universal strike” Lane departed to found a “Utopia” at Cosme, Paraguay—and the Queensland Labour Party became definitely “Marxist” in its tenets, announcing in somewhat grandiloquent language its intention to “abolish the wage-system” and to

“nationalise the means of production, distribution and exchange,” and adding that it intended to complete these revolutionary changes in “our time.” A Scotch miner, Glassey by name, a good looking, vain, kindly and unintellectual Keir Hardie, became the leader of the Party, consisting almost exclusively of working men representing “back blocks” mining constituencies and vast areas of pasturage on which rouseabouts and shearers form the majority of voters. But though the programme and policy of the Labour Party has lost some of its virulence of language its abstract propositions have not been worked out into feasible proposals and the Party has had to content itself with cavilling at the every day administration of the Government, and screeching loudly at each reactionary measure or at the rumour of a big capitalist manipulation of public resources. The Labour members are a respectable well-conducted set of men, attending punctiliously to their parliamentary business but showing no parliamentary capacity as an Opposition, and utterly unfitted to take up the work of Government should the present Government be defeated at the polls. Altogether the political situation in Queensland is about as hopeless from a progressive point of view as it well could be under a Responsible Government elected by a wide franchise.

Brisbane is a pretentious little place: blocks of buildings run up in good times, now half-tenanted and badly kept. The Hotel we stayed in (Bellevue, opposite the Houses of Parliament) looked quite attractive with its verandas running along each story facing the gardens: but inside it was horridly dirty and all the arrangements were slovenly.

J. T. Bell, the son of a ruined squatter, a tall good-looking elderly young man, with a marked Oxford accent and mannerism took us in hand and entertained us handsomely. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly, a nominal lawyer, and an “independent” supporter of the Government. His sole idea of politics was to secure the expenditure of public money in his constituency; he had intimated to the Government that