

Australian Socialist League, October 1890

Statement of Principles

The Australian Socialist League is founded for the purpose of spreading the principles and working for the realization of Socialism by every means within its power.

The capitalist form of society in which we at present exist, and which the capitalists would fight to uphold, is based upon class supremacy and class robbery: maintained by class government, through the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

This economic power, this possession by the landlord and capitalist class of the whole of the forces of wealth production, puts the working class in complete subjection to this said dominant class, and thus deprives the working class-the great mass of the people-of any voice in the vital question of How the wealth, by which we alone can live, Should be produced and distributed.

As the present system is thus based upon class antagonism and injustice, and as the capitalist class will only permit the wage-earning class to produce wealth in the form of commodities for sale, and pay to them as wages but one-third of the wealth so produced; and take for themselves the other two-thirds as profits, surplus value or unpaid labour; the aforesaid mode of production for profit should be superseded by the national or collective production of wealth for use.

Therefore, we Socialists declare:-That the day for blind production, competition and private enterprise has passed by; and that the source and instruments of wealth production and distribution should be declared and treated as common property. That is to say:- The land, the mines, the factories and machines, the raw material, the shipping, the wharves and warehouses, and all the other factors used in the production and distribution of wealth should be nationalized: Thus, in its accomplishment, reaching the next inevitable stage in the history of human society when the requirements of social life shall be rationally produced and equitably distributed.

By Parliamentary and Municipal action the Socialist League will strive for the following measures as palliatives of existing evils. -

1. All education, higher as well as elementary, to be free, secular, industrial and compulsory for all alike.
2. All children to attain the age of fifteen years before being permitted to engage in any wage-earning occupation.
3. Legislation by the people in such wise that no project of law shall become legally binding till submitted to and accepted by a majority vote of the people. The adoption of the Referendum principle as a means towards this end. ie, That (say) one-tenth of the electors shall upon signing a requisition demand and have taken a vote of the whole people upon any proposed law that the legislators may have decided upon, and accept it or reject it as the majority may decide.
4. The expenses of the administration of justice to be borne by the State.
5. Adult suffrage (male and female); abolition of plural voting; all elections to take place on the same day.
6. The speedy resumption of land; and the prevention of any further alienation of the public lands.
7. That all revenue be raised by direct taxation; by a land tax, and a cumulative income tax on all incomes over a fixed minimum, not exceeding S,300 per annum.
8. All Government and municipal work to be performed by the Government and municipalities without the intervention of the contractor.

9. Municipal control of gas and similar works; municipal construction of dwellings, to be let at rents to cover cost of construction and maintenance alone.
 10. Free railways and tramways.
 11. All factories and mines to be fully inspected by duly qualified inspectors, elected by the operatives themselves in their respective districts, by ballot; the expenses to be borne by the State.
 12. Eight hours (or less) to be the legal working day in all wage-earning occupations; overtime to be rendered a penal offence.
 13. The abolition of the permanent force; and the cessation of voting money for the maintenance of a foreign fleet in Australian waters.
 14. Abolition of the Legislative Council.
 15. Establishment of a National Bank, which shall absorb all private institutions that derive profit from operations in money and credit.
 16. The State to commence production of the necessaries of life, and so absorb the unemployed, and pave the way for national co-operation and distribution.
- There is no function the capitalists perform that the people organised could not better perform for themselves.**

James Normington Rawling Collection, ANU Archives of Business and Labour, Item N57/330, 'ASL Manifestos, rules and constitution' (Rawling's handwritten copy). Reprinted in David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 253-254