

Manifesto of the Democratic Association of Victoria, 1872

The Democratic Association of Victoria is formed with the view of acquiring and disseminating a knowledge of social principles, and cognate subjects; and of preparing itself to take co-operative action with kindred associations throughout the colonies and with the International Association of Europe and America.

The attempt to remove an evil without sufficiently understanding its causes and conditions, only tends to complications and increased disorder. The struggle which comes from a sense of wrong may demonstrate a class power, and be the means of obtaining concessions; but no class can receive proper organisation, nor can it procure concessions of a reformatory nature unless its actions are based upon a knowledge of foundational principles. The diffusion of such knowledge would lead to a systematic and uniform democratic action.

The efforts of Trades Unions, although productive of much good, have necessarily failed to achieve the emancipation of labor, because of their class character; nor can we hope for a complete success for democracy without international democratic co-operation. To be completely successful, Reform must make a consentaneous effort throughout the civilised world; each nation working out its own share, not competitively, but in concert with others.

This Society adopts as the basis of its creed the principles contained in the first Manifesto issued by the International Association; viz.

‘Considering,

‘That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means, not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of the class rule:

‘That the economical subjection of the men of labor to the monopoliser of the means of labor—that is, the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mutual degradation, and political dependence:

‘That the economical emancipation of the working classes is, therefore, the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinated as a means:

‘That all efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labor in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries:

‘That the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries:

‘That the present revival of the working classes in the most industrious countries of Europe, while it raises a new hope, gives solemn warning against a relapse into the old errors, and calls for the immediate combination of the still disconnected movements:

‘They declare that this International Association, and all societies and individuals adhering to it, will acknowledge truth, justice, and morality as the basis of their conduct towards each other, and towards all men, without regard to color, creed, or nationality:

‘They hold it the duty of a man to claim the rights of a man and a citizen, not only for himself, but for every man who does his duty. No rights without duties, no duties without rights ...

‘Manifesto of the Democratic Association of Victoria’, *The Australian International Monthly*, 8 June 1872. Reproduced in R.N. Ebbels, *The Australian Labor Movement: 1850-*

1907, extracts from contemporary documents, pp 200-201. Reprinted in David Lovell, Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution, pp 249-250