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THE TRADE UNIONS

BY

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 ***Communist Theory and
Practice of Trade Unionism***

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE . . .

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THE aim of this analysis of the Australian Trade Union movement is to show that without the consistent application of Marxism-Leninism to its problems, without a revolutionary theory, the Trade Union movement is doomed to futility, nay, more, is exposed to the same danger of its destruction, to the fate that befell the Trade Union movements of Germany, Italy, etc., at the hands of fascism.

I have endeavoured also to analyse a number of the main experiences in the history of the Australian movement in the light of Marxism-Leninism; the effects of the economic crises, the role of reformism, the major strikes and other features, that they might serve us as a guide in avoiding pitfalls, and to utilise these experiences to give a broad leadership to the Trade Unions in future battles.

I wish here to express appreciation of valuable assistance tendered in compiling the material by a number of Comrades, particularly Comrades Miles, Dixon, Thornton and Wright.

September, 1942.

L. L. SHARKEY.

By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live. (Note by Frederick Engels to the Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848.)

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Growth of Trade Unionism in Australia

Introduction by E. W. CAMPBELL

ASSOCIATIONS of workmen of one type or another can be traced far back into history, but Trade Unions as we know them to-day date back only to the 18th century.

Britain was the first country to become capitalist, and it was there that Trade Unions first appeared. The Industrial Revolution, which took place in the last half of the 18th century, gave impetus to the growth of Trade Unionism. British workers in one trade after another began to form permanent combinations and to wage strikes to protect and improve their conditions of employment. Later, as capitalism developed in Europe and America, workers there formed organisations similar in character to the British Trade Unions. It was in this epoch, when Trade Unions had just been formed, that Karl Marx lived and worked. Marx attached considerable importance to the role and functions of the Trade Unions. He realised that they represented the first steps in the organisation of the workers as a class. An outline of Marx's views on this subject is found in the resolution on the past, present and future of Trade Unions, adopted at the Geneva Congress of the First International in 1866.

Concerning the origin of Trade Unions, Marx points out how capital is concentrated social power, while the worker has only his individual labour power at his disposal. Therefore, the agreement between Capital and Labour can never be just. The only social force possessed by the workers is their numerical strength. This force, however, is impaired by the absence of unity. The lack of unity among the workers is caused by the inevitable competition among themselves, and is maintained by it. The Trade Unions developed originally out of the spontaneous attempts of the workers to do away with this competition, or at least to restrict it, for the purpose of obtaining at least such contractual conditions as would raise them above the status of virtual slaves. The immediate aim of the Trade Unions, therefore, was limited to waging the day-to-day struggle against Capital, as a means of defence against continuous abuses by the latter, i.e. questions concerning wages and working hours.

Marx goes on to state that this activity of the Trade Unions is not only justified but also necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the capitalist mode of production exists. On the contrary, it must become general by means of creating and uniting Trade Unions in all countries. This refutes the arguments of the present day ultra-Lefts who indulge in academic criticism of the struggle for immediate demands. If the Trade Unions refrained from such struggle there would be no limit to the exploitation of the workers other than that of physical endurance. The workers would be reduced to the status of slaves.

Although they limited themselves to the day-to-day struggle, Marx points out how the Unions, without being aware of it, become the focal points for the organisation of the working class. "If Trade Unions have become indispensable for the guerrilla fight between Capital and Labour," he wrote, "they are even more important as organised bodies to promote the abolition of the very system of wage labour." From this we see that Marx attached great political significance to the Trade Unions, that he regarded them least of all as neutral organisations, as non-political organisations.

Trade Unionism began to take root in this country in the 1850's following the abolition of convict transportation. Tradesmen and mechanics coming from Britain established Craft Unions in the building and engineering trades.

For a time the gold rush cut across this development, but in the long run it had a beneficial effect. The Eureka Stockade (1854) took place when the Labour Movement was only beginning to take shape. It had a profound effect upon later developments.

The first great question to occupy the attention of the Trade Unions was the 8-Hour Day. After a period of agitation and action this was first won by the Stonemasons' Union in the Eastern States in 1855-56. The Combined Committee set up in the course of the struggle in Victoria became the forerunner of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The 8-Hour Day became a rallying cry uniting the forces of Labour in Australia. In the 1860's coal miners in New South Wales were organised and, in 1874, the miners on the gold fields of Victoria formed the Amalgamated Miners' Association.

The shearers in N.S.W. and Queensland organised into what subsequently became the A.W.U.

From 1860 to 1890 the young unions displayed great militancy and won many concessions from the employers. Seamen, waterside workers and other sections formed unions.

Up to 1890 conditions favoured the unions; capitalism was expanding and it was cheaper for employers to grant concessions rather than face lengthy stoppages. By 1890, however, conditions changed. Wool prices dropped, and the employers, faced with the need to cut costs, launched an attack on the unions. Sporadic struggles culminated in the Great Maritime Strike of 1890 which involved a majority of the organised workers in the eastern States. The strike ended in defeat. The employers, backed by the power of the State, were more strongly organised and better prepared than the workers. The defeat in 1890 led the Trade Unionists to organise politically. The A.L.P. was formed. In spite of the efforts of William Lane to give it a Socialist objective, it became a purely reformist party, coming more and more under the domination of bourgeois ideology as it developed.

Up to 1914 conditions favoured the growth of reformism in Australia. Capitalism was still expanding and in a position to concede minor reforms. Even so the history of the Labour Party in this period is marked by many conflicts between the "politicians" and the "industrialists." Failure of Labour Governments when in office to implement even the most elementary demands on Labour's programme caused many Trade Unionists to turn towards syndicalism. The I.W.W. sprang up and flourished for a time, particularly during the war. But syndicalism proved just as bankrupt as reformism. The 1917 General Strike gave the workers more valuable experience, helped them to realise the futility of both these trends. A futile attempt to combine what was considered to be the best in both tendencies in a new organisation called the One Big Union was made after the 1917 strike defeat. The O.B.U. scheme broke down partly because of its own inherent weaknesses, largely because of the opposition of the A.W.U. bureaucracy, labour politicians and craft union leaders.

The victory of the Russian Revolution and the creation of the Communist International 1919 showed the workers of Australia the real path of progress. In 1920 the Communist Party of Australia was formed with strong Trade Union connections. Now at last it became possible to unite firmly the economic movement of the Trade Unions with political action, aimed at the ultimate realisation of Socialism, in accordance with the directives of Marx contained in the Resolution of the 1871 Conference of the First International. Since its formation in 1920 the Communist Party of Australia endeavoured to carry out the advice of Stalin. Many ups and downs have been met with but the general tendency has been towards progress. Under the influence of the Communist Party propaganda and activity, the political level of the Australian Trade Union movement has been raised. There are still many remnants of craft narrowness, economism and even Sydicalist traits.

The influence of reformism is not yet completely broken, but it is no longer the dominant trend it was in the past. Under Communist influence the unions are fast becoming the types of organisation Marx deemed desirable and necessary for the victory over Capitalism and the establishment of Socialism. They are learning that the purely economic struggle has its limitations. They are beginning to understand their role as "organised bodies to promote the abolition of the system of wage labour" (Marx). They are learning how "to act consciously as focal points for organising the working class in the greater interests of its complete emancipation."

—E. W. CAMPBELL.

PART ONE

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE

MARX and Engels have given us a graphic picture of the birth and mode of development of the Trade Unions and industrial struggles. "The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the work people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois, who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workmen of the Middle Ages. (The Luddites in England, for example. L.S.)

"At this stage the labourers still form an incoherent mass, scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition . . .

"But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in numbers, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more . . . the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trade Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that places the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralise the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle.

"This organisation of proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset

again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier." (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848.)

But the working class, unaided, cannot raise itself to the level of an understanding of the historical development of society, that is, to a revolutionary, Socialist and Communist consciousness. Lenin enunciated this proposition in his basic work "What is to be Done?" Lenin did this in the course of his attack upon the theory of "spontaneity"; of reliance upon the spontaneous development of the labour movement lacking a guiding theory, without a well-organised and trained Party to lead it; in his denunciation of "tailism," of lagging behind the masses. Lenin based this conclusion on the conditions of the working class in capitalist society; lack of education, hard work, lack of leisure, poverty, etc.

The formulation of the theoretical foundation of the labour movement, Communism, was made by two great men, namely, KARL MARX and FREDERICK ENGELS.

By so doing, by placing themselves at the head of the proletarian movement, Marx and Engels, of course, became the greatest of proletarians.

Lenin wrote of Marx and Engels in this regard as follows: "We said that **there could not yet be Social-Democratic (Communist) consciousness among the workers.** This consciousness could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only Trade Union consciousness, i.e., it may itself realise the necessity for combining in unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to their social status, the founders of modern scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. Similarly, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary Socialist intelligentsia." (Lenin: "What is to be Done?")

Our Party to-day has a similar task, to raise the political understanding of the masses to the level of a Communist understanding of society and the consequent tasks of the labour movement. Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, have given us an understanding of the historical tasks of the working class in regard to the revolutionary change-over from Capitalism to Socialism. The advance guard of the proletariat have been able to grasp these theories, to master Marxism-Leninism; it has to be taken to the masses who, unaided, are unable to raise themselves to the level of a theoretical understanding, are unable to advance beyond the immediate practical tasks of wages, conditions, strikes.

The Trade Unions are the most important mass organisations of the working class and therefore, have a special importance for the Revolutionaries. "Without the Trade Unions a revolution is impossible," Lenin has written.

What are our tasks in regard to the Trade Unions?

These tasks fall into two main sections: (1) The raising of the theoretical level, the winning of the workers for a revolutionary objective, and (2) the practical-organisational.

In regard to the first, Marx gave a classical summing up of the Trade Unions, their tasks, and the need for a revolutionary outlook and objective for the Trade Unions in "Value, Price and Profit."

"These few hints will suffice to show that the very development of modern industry must progressively turn the scale in favour of the capitalist against the working man, and that consequently the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the **value of labour** more or less to its **minimum limit**. Such being the tendency of **things** in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches, past salvation. I think I have shown that their struggles for the standard of wages are incidents inseparable from the whole wages system, that in 99 cases out of 100 their efforts at raising wages are only efforts at maintaining the given value of labour and that the necessity of debating their price with the capitalist is inherent to their condition of having to sell themselves as commodities. By cowardly giving way in their everyday

conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.

"At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady.

"They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the **material conditions** and the **social forms** necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the **conservative** motto: 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work,' they ought to inscribe on their banner the **revolutionary** watchword: 'Abolition of the wages system!'

"After this very long and, I fear, tedious exposition, which I was obliged to enter into to do some justice to the subject matter, I shall conclude by proposing the following:

"Firstly. A general rise in the rate of wages would result in a fall in the general rate of profit, but, broadly speaking, not affect the prices of commodities.

"Secondly. The general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise but to sink the average standard of wages.

"Thirdly. Trade Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachment of capital. They fail particularly from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system."

The strategical aim of the Communists in the Trade Unions is precisely the one indicated by Marx; to inscribe on their banners the revolutionary watchword, "abolition of the wages system."

Marx therein gave us an understanding of the role of the "immediate demands": of the day-to-day struggles, without which the workers would be degraded, broken

wretches, past salvation. Marx indicates also the role of the partial struggles as preparation for the revolutionary struggle for political power. "By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement." Lenin summed up this teaching of Marx on the Trade Unions when he designated the Trade Unions as "schools of the class struggle, schools of Communism." Marxism-Leninism thus places a fundamental task for us in regard to the Trade Unions, the defeat of reformism and their transformation into revolutionary bodies fighting for the Proletarian Dictatorship.

STALIN: THE PARTY GROWS STRONG BY WINNING THE UNIONS

Dealing with the importance of the Trade Unions as the main source of strength of the workers' Party and combating the sectarian trends among the Communists in the West European and other countries, Comrade Stalin declared:

"In the West there are still certain 'Communists' who do not understand this and who continue to propagate their anti-proletarian and anti-revolutionary slogan: 'Leave the Trade Unions!' It must be said that no one could do the Communist Movement in the West more harm than these and similar 'Communists.'

"These people think of 'attacking' the Trade Unions from without, regarding them as an enemy camp. They do not understand that, good or bad, the rank and file worker regards the Trade Unions as his citadels, his strongholds, which help him to maintain his wages, his working day, and so forth. They do not understand that far from facilitating Communist penetration among the vast masses, such policy undermines this work.

"The average rank and file worker will say to such a 'Communist,' 'You are attacking my citadel, you wish to destroy the cause which it has taken me decades to build, because, as you say, Communism is better than Trade Unionism. I don't know. Perhaps you are right in your theoretical discourses on Communism; it's not for me, a simple worker, to judge your theories. But one thing I do know: I have my Trade Union citadels, they have led me into battle, have defended me, well or ill, against the onslaughts of the capitalists; and he who tries to destroy

these citadels is trying to destroy my cause, the cause of the workers. Cease attacking my citadels, come into the Trade Unions, work in them five years or even more, help us to improve the unions, and to strengthen them, and in the meantime I shall see what sort of a fellow you are. If you really prove to be the right fellow, I, of course, will not hesitate to support you, and so on. That, more or less, is the attitude of the average rank and file worker of the present day towards the anti-Trade Unionists. He who fails to understand this characteristic feature in the mentality of the average worker in Europe will understand nothing about the position of present-day Communist Parties.

"What constitutes the strength of Social-Democracy in the West? The fact that it has support in the Trade Unions.

"What constitutes the weakness of our Communist Parties in the West? The fact that they are not yet linked with the Trade Unions and that certain elements within the Communist Parties do not wish to be linked with them.

"Hence, the main task of the Communist Parties of the West at the present time is to develop the campaign for unity in the Trade Union movement and to bring it to its consummation; to see to it that all Communists, without exception, join Trade Unions, there to work systematically and patiently to strengthen the solidarity of the working class in its fight against capital, and thus attain the condition that will enable the Communist Parties to rely upon the Trade Unions."

These words were spoken by Stalin sixteen years ago, but they might have been said yesterday, for they still hold force for us.

A GOOD UNION WORKER

In order to equip themselves as not only the best theoretical and political leaders of the Trade Unions, but also as the best practical Trade Unionists, militants must master the Awards, as they cover their industry or factory, they must know the Rule Book of the Union and its organisation, history, customs and practices. Only in this way can they become the best Trade Unionists.

Some members fail to keep themselves "financial" in their Unions, with the consequence that they lose standing and when an opportunity to contest an official position happens along, they are ineligible to stand. Positions are lost that might have been won but for this carelessness.

It is also bad for a militant to drop out of a Union whilst in arrears and without notifying the Union and complying with the rules covering resignations. This may afterwards be used by the reactionaries to discredit us, and in any case, as the Communists must be the best unionists, they must take care to be financial and observe the rules. Members should have a knowledge of the rules of debate in order to prevent a "slick" chairman putting one over them.

Comrades in the Unions must study the conditions and problems of Union Members and draw up programmes of demands for the Union to be able to give a lead, in good time, on all matters affecting the Union and strive at all times to unite the Union Membership and foster good relations with other Unions.

Speaking in the Union is also an art. We do not want to bore the workers with long and windy speeches, or go over their heads by being too "theoretical." We must deal with the questions before the meeting in an attractive fashion. This does not mean that we confine ourselves solely to economic questions. "No politics in the Union" means bourgeois politics in the Union. We must skilfully seize appropriate moments and opportunities to discuss politics and Socialism with the workers at Union meetings and elsewhere. Our goal is to raise the consciousness of the Unionists to the level of a Socialist understanding.

PART TWO

REFORMIST "THEORIES" AND HARMFUL PRACTICES MUST BE ROUTED

"No Politics in the Union"

THIS slogan was put forward by the "Economists" in Russia. The "Economists" said that the tasks of the Trade Unions should be confined to the economic—wages, conditions, hours.

Lenin attacked and destroyed this trend, pointing out that "no politics in the Union" really meant bourgeois politics in the Unions; it meant that the workers were left at the mercy of bourgeois propaganda and ideology.

We have seen that the objective must be to politically revolutionise the Unions. Some Comrades interpret this to mean that they should confine themselves to academic,

abstract discourses on theory and political questions at Union meetings. This is wrong. Communists must be the best Trade Unionists, i.e., giving a lead on all the problems of the Trade Unions and lead the fight for the economic demands of the workers; in short, be the best fighters on the job and during strike periods.

At the same time, politics must be introduced, linked with the Union's problems, and on favourable occasions when political issues are raised in correspondence, etc., to educate the workers in Socialist ideas. The Union journals and other avenues must be fully utilised for such political education. The Union Journal, "The Ironworker," is a model of the sort of Trade Union newspaper required, combining the industrial and political working class policy. The reformists here in Australia cling to the "Economists'" idea of "no politics in the Union," or only reformist politics in the Union. The aim must be to kill this reactionary idea in the Unions by showing that, without a correct political policy, without the theoretical education of the rank and file, the Union's efforts are in the end doomed to futility.

The question of the relationship between economics and politics was continuously before Marx and the First International. In a resolution drawn up by him for the 1871 Conference the following instructive passage occurs:—

"In the presence of an unbridled reaction which violently crushes every effort at emancipation on the part of the working class, and pretends to maintain by brute force the distinction of classes and the political domination of the propertied classes resulting from it; considering that against this collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes; that this constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end—the abolition of the classes; that the combination of forces which the working class has already effected by its economical struggles ought at the same time serve as a lever against the political power of the landlords and capitalists; the Conference recalls to the members of the International: "That in the militant state of the working class, its economic movement and its political action are indissolubly united."

Here is a clear expression by Marx of the idea that politics are the concentrated expression of economics, that the workers need a revolutionary political party to lead the struggle for Socialism, and that the Trade Unions, far from adopting an attitude of neutrality, of non-partisanship, should adhere to such a party and play their part under its leadership in the struggle.

BANKRUPTCY OF "GRADUALIST" THEORIES

The reformist leaders in the Trade Union movement contend that the needs of the working class can be satisfied by a policy of reforms, by a gradual increase in wages, a shortening of hours and improvement of the job conditions. They tell the workers that if the Unions keep on increasing wages that soon there will be no exploitation, no margin of profit left for the employing classes.

This is the Trade Union equivalent of the Social-Democratic theory of "gradualism" of "peaceful evolution," of "revolution without class-struggle, bloodshed or dislocation of industry."

It is true that the reformists can point to instances where the Arbitration Court has awarded increased wages, shortened hours, or eased conditions of employment in the factories. Why, therefore, cannot we continue this peaceful, evolutionary process until we make the position of the bosses untenable in industry; why not undermine their control by these piecemeal processes? It will be found, however, that tremendous mass pressure (economic strikes, demonstrations and agitation in the Press and on the platform) preceded all reforms by the Arbitration Courts or "voluntary" concessions to the workers.

For example, the first Lang Government in N.S.W. "granted" the 44-hour week in N.S.W., although previously Lang had opposed the 44-hour week as an "extremist" Communist policy. But the Building Workers in Sydney absented themselves from work on Saturday mornings for a prolonged period. Other Unionists struck or threatened to strike over the issue of the shorter week. The Unions were in a good position because it was the period of temporary capitalist stabilisation, of relative boom. So finally, the Lang Government legislated the 44-hours and claimed

all the credit, although it is quite clear that it was the economic situation and the mass pressure of the workers that was really responsible.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels answered the gradualist "theory" long, long ago, in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848), to be exact.

These two great geniuses, the founders of Communism, wrote on this point:—

"The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting **commercial crises**, makes the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes."

Let us apply this to our own Australian experiences. The last decades of the 19th century were a period of great Trade Union and class struggles in this country, for the raising of the general standards, which were very poor.

After this, in line with the rapid growth and expansion of capitalism there was a more or less continuous improvement, side by side with the rapid growth of the A.L.P. and the Trade Unions. This was the hey-day, the golden age of reformism; it had one hundred per cent. control of the Unions and the reformist Labour governments were coming to office and initiating a number of reforms. This was the time when "Gradualism" looked good to the workers.

The outbreak of the Imperialist world war, reflecting the general crisis of world capitalism, ended this period. By 1917 the Unions were on strike, striving to retain something of their position, to save something from the chaos created by the prolonged reactionary war. The reformist Labour governments (Hughes, Holman, etc.) had broken asunder and collapsed under the strain of the crisis, and given way to anti-working-class governments. When the war ended, there was vast unemployment and hardship,

which neither the A.L.P. nor the bourgeois parties could alleviate; to the contrary, they conducted an "offensive" against the workers.

"Commercial crises," "Competition" had led to war, to intensified "commercial crises" which destroyed the gains the workers made in the preceding "peaceful" capitalist expansion period.

This proves to the hilt Marx's statement, about the effects on the workers of the capitalist system and his proposition: "**Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.**" (Author's emphasis.) And it is true that in this period of "peaceful" reform and the period of crises, the unions did grow in numbers, organisation and strength; the workers began to take a more critical attitude towards reformism as a result of this experience, which facilitated the foundation of the Communist Party of Australia.

"Commercial crises," promoted by the imperialist rivalry, by the chaotic nature of capitalism itself and its unstable, anarchistic, transitory character preclude an endless chain of reforms, i.e., "gradualism." Subsequent history provided further proof. How well have Marx's words on the obliteration of distinctions among the workers been fulfilled. The conveyor belt and mass production undermines the skilled tradesman and replaces him with the semi-skilled and unskilled. Speed-up, Bedeaux, and Taylor and other "systems," piece-work, and bonus systems extract the last ounce of energy from the workers, irrespective of shortening of hours.

On the basis of the defeat of the Revolution after the war, except in Russia, and an intense "offensive" against the living standards of the workers on a world scale, capitalism was temporarily stabilised. A relative boom set in. Once more Arbitration Courts and reformist governments were able to make concessions to the workers. Again reformist illusions commenced to wax, and the reformists, headed by Lang, were able to commence a bitter struggle against the militants in the Unions, against the Communists.

This reformist honeymoon was short-lived. The world economic crisis hit Australia with devastating force in 1929. The workers were shut out of the factories. Their basic

wage became the "dole." By means of the Premier's plan, initiated and operated by the Labour Government with the assistance of the reformist Trade Union leaders, who stifled the defensive actions and broke many of the strikes of the workers, the gains of the preceding period made by the Trade Unions were once more swept away.

Before the present war, there was a mass unemployed army in all capitalist countries including Australia, living, or rather existing, on the dole.

This is in accordance also with what Marx and Engels wrote in the "Manifesto"—"The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the Commune, just as the petty-bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern labourer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth."

The mass armies of unemployed in Britain, U.S.A., and the Nazi "labour camps," before the war, all testified to the growth of "pauperism," to the correctness of Marx's forecast.

The "revisers" of Marx, especially Bernstein and the German Trade Union bureaucrats, the fathers of the "revision" of Marxism in favour of reformism were utterly opportunist as the subsequent history of trade unionism under capitalism amply proves. They based their "theories" on the expansion period of capitalism prior to the 1914-18 war, and they were chiefly responsible for the undermining of the revolutionary spirit of German Social-Democracy and the Second International, thereby defeating the German Socialist Revolution and giving us Hitler.

"Gradualism" leads, not to continuous improvement and Socialism, but to "pauperism" and fascism, and it cannot be otherwise whilst capitalism exists.

"ARISTOCRACY," REFORMISM, ARBITRATION

The Australian Trade Union Movement has been permeated and for long dominated by the ideology of the reformists. Reformism, Lenin has explained, is the outlook of the higher paid, skilled craftsman, the "aristocrats of

labour." This "aristocracy" is given concessions on the basis of Imperialist exploitation—super-profits—from the colonies. This induces the belief that workers' conditions can be continuously improved within the framework of the capitalist system, and that there is therefore no need to struggle for Socialism. The reformists substitute class co-operation, class peace, class collaboration for class-struggle.

Reformist class-collaboration expresses itself in the adherence of the unions, in Australia and New Zealand, to legalism—to the State-instituted Arbitration Courts, the Arbitration system. The function of Arbitrationist legalism is to prevent strike struggles and to enforce acceptance, by law, of a low standard of living. It will at once be seen that Arbitration is detrimental to the development of the class-struggle, and class-consciousness and of that genuine and fundamental solidarity and perfected organisation necessary to the revolutionary struggle for Socialism. Nor has the Arbitration Court given any real concessions without strikes and mass political campaigns. The basic wage to-day, the real wage, related to the cost of living, is no higher than that first basic wage awarded by the Courts, the Harvester judgment of 1907.

Arbitration Court procedure, as far as the basic wage is concerned, is to assemble a number of so-called experts as witnesses, whose evidence usually consists of showing the least and cheapest varieties and quantities of food and clothing and lowest rent (based on the "industrial" and semi-slum areas), that is, to find the minimum food, clothing and shelter necessary to sustain the working masses.

The Court is the exemplification and the epitome of Marx's law that wages are based on the amount, in the given conditions, necessary to keep the labourer in working condition and to ensure the "reproduction of the race of wage-workers." The workers can only improve this condition to some extent, by striking, which they continue to do, despite the Arbitration Court. As Engels wrote: "The law of wages is not upset by the struggle of Trade Unions. On the contrary it is enforced by them. Without the means of resistance of the Trade Union the labourer does not receive what is due even according to the rules of the wages system."

When the workers strike, the Arbitration Courts at once assume of the role of strike-breakers, refusing to consider

the strikers' demands whilst on strike, ordering the men back to work, taking "secret ballots" of the strikers, etc., and by every form of intimidation and pressure endeavouring to force the workers back to work. The Courts frame awards deliberately to split the workers.

The reformist Trade Union officials wholeheartedly support Arbitration. They do not want strikes and struggles to disturb their peaceful salaried existence. Lenin characterised the reformist Trade Union leaders in his article (written in 1913), "On the Labour Government in Australia" as follows: "The leaders of the Australian Labour Party are Trade Union officials, an element which everywhere represents a most moderate and 'capital-serving' element, and, in Australia, it is altogether peaceful, and purely liberal."

It was this "element," so aptly described by the great leader of the Russian revolution, that co-operated with the employing classes to shackle the Trade Union movement by means of the Arbitration Courts. It is these officials who prevent the Unionists breaking from Arbitration. But neither the capitalists, the Court, nor the reformists, have been able to "abolish" the elemental class struggle. Despite them, the Australian Trade Union movement has a proud record of struggle in defence, and for the improvement of, the standard of living of the masses.

The Communists regard the State-controlled Arbitration system as a pernicious, anti-working class institution, whose objective is to keep the workers shackled to the capitalistic state, i.e., eternally wage-slaves. We fight against this Arbitration, relying on the unity and organisation of the workers in the struggle to improve conditions and enforce collective agreements with the employers instead of legalised Awards. We want to restore the position described by Engels in his "Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844":—

"Trade Unions came into being in every branch of industry. They openly worked for the defence of the individual workers against the tyranny and injustice of the bourgeoisie. Their aims were:—To fix wages by collective bargaining, to negotiate with the employers of labour as a power functioning in the name of all the members of the union, to regulate wages in accordance with the profits of the entrepreneur, to raise wages whenever possible, to keep wages up to the same level in every branch of work in the factories."

In the meantime, until the majority of unionists are convinced of the role of ARBITRATION, Communists have to represent their unions in the Court, in order not to lose contact with the masses, and, for tactical reasons, may temporarily support one form of Arbitration against another, i.e., Conciliation Committees, etc.

Our condemnation of capitalist State-Controlled Arbitration Courts does not mean opposition to Government legislation guaranteeing conditions won by the masses.

Marx wrote on this point: "It (the working class) compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the Ten Hours Bill in England was carried." (Marx and Engels "The Manifesto of the Communist Party.")

Marx also praised the appointment by the British Government of factory inspectors and laws regarding factory conditions.

Lenin wrote:—"It (the working class) may itself realise the necessity for combining in Unions, for fighting against the employers and for striving to compel the Government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc." (Emphasis mine.—L.S.)

An Australian example of this is shown in the miners' struggle for pensions and other reforms which, after two general strikes had been waged in the industry, were finally embodied in Bills passed by the various State Legislatures.

Legislation of this character, particularly at the demand of the masses, is quite different in character to the Arbitration Court. The Arbitration Court ties the Unions to the capitalist State, the Courts strive to dictate the policy of the unions, i.e., the outlawing of strikes, refusal to hear strikers' claims until they return to work, imposing of penalties on unions, and so forth. Such Arbitration is a bourgeois policy to control the unions, to prevent their development along class lines. This policy of control of the workers by the capitalist State has been perfected by the fascists; the Nazi Labour Front and Mussolini's so-called "Corporations;" sham substitutes for the free Trade Unions. The legislation, referred to by Marx and Lenin, resulting from the mass demand leaves the Unions independent of the capitalist State and free to determine their own policy

Instead of being "Tribunes of the People," as Lenin put it, they sink to the level of purely "Trade Union Militants," and tend to become separated from the Party.

It has happened in our history that with success in winning official positions in the Union, the Party organisation has actually gone back, because comrades concentrated narrowly on the Union, and lost sight of the need to build a mass Communist Party to lead the whole of the toiling people. Winning official positions is only a first step towards the raising of the political consciousness of the Trade Unionists, towards a network of factory committees, towards industrial Unions, for a correct economic and political policy for the Unions.

It is the duty of all members and, in this case particularly of those who are elected to Union positions, to fit themselves to be tribunes of the people, masters of Marxism-Leninism in theory and practice.

Along with "narrowness" the remnants of anarcho-syndicalism must be combated. There are some peculiar exhibitions of syndicalist ideas in the Unions. For example, in some of our biggest Unions, leading officials do not possess a vote (Miners, Seamen, etc.). The I.W.W. believed that a Union official, receiving more salary than a worker, was necessarily reactionary, and viewed a worker elected to Parliament in the same light. Hence its narrow "no politics" outlook. It was this influence that led to rules in several Unions prohibiting officials from voting. That is one example of syndicalism. The belief that only the Union matters, however, is the main remnant of this ideology; it is still to be found in the Party, and, in the minds of the comrades who are influenced by such an outlook, tends to be contemptuous of the work of the Party in a myriad other spheres.

Another dangerous heritage of anarcho-syndicalism is a tendency in time of strikes to rely upon the actions of individuals and small groups to deal with strike-breakers, substituting this for mass action by all of the strikers against the strike-breakers. There is also still a need to combat the anarcho-syndicalist tendency towards "sabotage." All of these harmful tendencies obviously hamper the Party's work.

PART THREE

THE STRIKE, THE CHIEF FIGHTING WEAPON OF THE UNIONS

ENGELS, in his book "Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844" deals with the struggle of the British workers to improve their conditions. He considers strikes a school of war, a necessary and compulsory weapon in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. Here is what Engels wrote:—"In war the injury of one party is the benefit of the others, and since working men are on a war footing towards their employers they do merely what great potentates do when they seize each other by the throat . . . The incredible frequency of these strikes proves best of all to what extent social war has broken out all over England.

". . . These strikes, at first skirmishes, sometimes result in weighty struggles; they decide nothing, it is true, but they are the strongest proof that the decisive battle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is approaching. They are the school of war of the working men in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided . . . and as schools of war they are unexcelled.

"It is in truth no trifle for a working man, who knows want from experience, to face it with his wife and children, to endure hunger and wretchedness for months together, and to stand firm and unshaken through it all. What is death, what the galleys which await the French revolutionist, in comparison with gradual starvation, with the daily sight of a starving family, with the certainty of future revenge on the part of the bourgeoisie, all of which the English working man chooses in preference to subjection under the yoke of the property-holding class . . . People who endure so much to bend one single bourgeois will be able to break the power of the whole bourgeoisie."

Engels, as we see, emphasises that the strike is one of the varieties of social war, that strikes are indispensable as schools of war. He fights against the underestimation of strikes, against a disdainful attitude towards the economic struggle of the workers. He stresses that great stores of courage, self-sacrifice, devotion and firmness are necessary for strikes, and that the army of the proletariat is created and forged in these preliminary battles. Marx shared this viewpoint of Engels.

All strikes have political significance, since everything that deals a blow to the capitalists deals a blow also to the capitalist order. But the point is the degree, the proportion of this significance. If an economic strike bears the nature of a spontaneous outburst, it does not thereby lose its political significance . . . "spontaneity is the primitive form of consciousness." (Lenin.) The political significance of this strike depends upon the size and scope of the movement. Even where the strike is on a broad scale, if the leaders from the very outset lead it into narrow craft channels, the political edge of the strike is blunted and it is immediately deprived of its chief content—it can no longer yield the political results which it could have yielded originally; if a strike which has purely economic demands as its point of departure is from the very beginning consciously directed along the line of combining it with the political struggle, it yields maximum effects. The general strike in N.S.W. in 1917 was an economic strike which bore the nature of a spontaneous outburst. From its size and scope and the conditions in which it took place (war period) it could have acquired immense political significance. But the reformist leaders failed to combine this strike with the general political struggle; they led it into "narrow craft channels," and consequently robbed it of its chief content. The 1917 strike, therefore, did not yield the political results which it could have yielded under more capable and revolutionary leadership.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks based themselves on the teachings of Marx and Engels. Whenever an economic struggle broke out in any part of Tsarist Russia, the Bolsheviks established contact with the strikers. They helped them win their partial demands, but at the same time developed their own Bolshevik propaganda aimed at gaining the strikers' support for the general revolutionary programme of the Party. That is why the economic struggle in Russia grew into a political struggle, and the general mass political strike into an armed uprising in 1905 and again in 1917.

Strikes, properly led and conducted and properly timed, are a revolutionary weapon. **Strikes develop the labour movement, organise and unite workers and win the intermediate social strata to the side of the revolution.**

There are many examples of this in the history of the Labour movement of this country and of our Party. The

big strike struggles of the '90's led to a political advance on the part of the working class. As a result of their experiences in the strikes of the '90's, the workers began to realise the need for independent political organisation, a political party of their own, separate from the bourgeois Liberals, whom previously the workers had usually supported.

This led to the development of the Australian Labour Party. The Labour Party, while it separated the workers organisationally from the bourgeois political parties, has failed because it did not break with bourgeois political ideas, with bourgeois ideology; it rejected the proletarian ideology, Marxism. Nevertheless, the formation of the A.L.P. at the time represented progress. The experience of the workers with A.L.P. reformism prepares the ground for the conquest of the workers by Marxist-Leninist ideas. The chief aim of the Communists is to build a party, not only organisationally, but ideologically and politically, independent of the bourgeoisie.

A number of strikes which we have led or influenced have considerably strengthened the Communist Party. In North Queensland, the Communist Party has polled its biggest Parliamentary votes. This is largely due to the great work of the Communists, J. C. Henry and others, who led the strikes of the cane-fields workers, and aroused the masses against the oppression of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the giant millionaire concern which has dominated Queensland's economics and politics.

Similarly, the Party's influence started to become widespread among the miners as a result of the strenuous fight of the Communists against the coalowners and the treacherous policy of the reformists during the lock-out of the Northern Miners in 1929-30. This lock-out took place in accordance with the general drive of the capitalist class at that period to undermine Australian standards of living and to solve their economic problems at the expense of the masses.

In defiance of an Arbitration award, the coal barons demanded a reduction in the miners' rates and locked them out when the men refused to accept it. This experience demonstrates clearly enough that the bosses accept Arbitration decisions only when it suits their book.

The miners on the Northern N.S.W. fields were locked out. The reformist leaders of the Union, together with the Lang-dominated N.S.W. Labor Party and the "Labour

Daily," opposed the extension of the struggle to the remaining coalfields, and prevented a general strike in the mining industry; they pretended that it was necessary to limit the struggle in order that the miners remaining at work might provide the finance for the locked-out Northern men. As industry, due to the economic crisis, was reduced to a low ebb, it was a comparatively simple matter for the capitalists to secure all the coal they needed from the pits that remained at work.

The Kavanagh-Ryan-Higgins Rightwing in our Party aided and abetted the reformists. This "leadership" declined to issue the call for an active fighting policy in the mining crisis. The Rightwing compelled our Party to remain passive for the first nine months of the lock-out, which lasted fifteen months. It was only after the rout of the Rightwing within the Party (1929-1930) that an active policy in regard to the lock-out became possible. Our new C.C. at once took energetic steps to implement an all-out policy for a general strike; it exposed the reformist contention that the Northern miners would win by means of a "folded arms" policy at a time when the capitalists were getting all the coal they needed. Party organisers were at once despatched to all the fields to struggle for a general strike. The Communists organised the miners for active resistance to police terrorism and the introduction of scabs into the pits.

The miners began to support the "all-out" policy. A conference of the lodges was called in the North, and the reformist officials only averted a decision for a general stoppage by giving small pits, with about 20 members, and who were unaffected by the lock-out, the same voting strength as the big fighting lodges with 500 and more membership.

The Scullin Federal Labour Government was elected at this time. Scullin and Theodore made lavish promises to the miners during the election, but repudiated them when in office, despite the fact that the Miners' Union had contributed £1,000 to the A.L.P. election funds.

The Party and militant miners were not strong enough to prevent a betrayal. After fifteen months of stubborn resistance, the bourgeoisie and the reformists compelled the miners to resume on the owners' terms.

The Communists won great prestige, however, because they had put forward the only correct policy and had foretold the inevitable outcome of the reformist "line," namely defeat for the mineworkers.

In the subsequent strikes of the miners (the "First" and "Second" rounds) which the Party was able to strongly influence and lead, the treacherous policy of partial stoppage (in the existing mining conditions, partial stoppages at other periods are essential) was repudiated and the miners were able to realise their programme; a programme that was formulated by the Communist leaders among the miners in collaboration with our Central Committee. The Party's position was thus strengthened among the mineworkers and our comrades are now in leading positions in the Union, and the Party receives a solid vote from the miners at election times.

Further good work will finally convert the miners' organisation into a really revolutionary Union and a firm support for the struggle for Socialism.

REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF MASS STRIKES

The revolutionary character of politicalised strike movements is revealed in the Russian Revolution. We read in the "Short History of the C.P.S.U.":—

"The workers' political strikes stirred up the whole country. Following the town, the countryside began to rise. In the spring, peasant unrest broke out. The peasants marched in great crowds against the landlords, raided their estates, sugar refineries and distilleries, and set fire to their palaces and manors. In a number of places the peasants seized the land, resorted to wholesale cutting down of forests, and demanded that the landed estates be turned over to the people . . .

"In June, 1905, a revolt broke out on the Potemkin, a battleship of the Black Sea Fleet. The battleship was at that time stationed near Odessa, where a general strike was in progress." (From the "Short History," C.P.S.U.)

The "Short History" relates how the strike struggles also brought the students and the liberal bourgeois into activity against Tsarism. Lenin, in preparing for the Russian Revolution, raised the slogan of mass political strikes, which he declared, "may be of great importance at the beginning and in the very process of insurrection."

The experience of the Russian labour movement shows clearly that, contrary to catchcries of the reformists, who claim that the class struggle of the workers "frightens" away the intermediate strata—the farmers, the middle class, the white collar employees—the opposite is the case.

The struggle of the workers arouses the rest of the toiling masses. An energetic struggle on the part of the workers wins them as allies of the workers, and establishes the leadership of the labour movement over these masses. Such was the experience of the Russian workers. An examination of the history of the Australian Labour movement also shows that great struggles lead not only to the growth of the Trade Union movement, but also to the election of Labour Governments (Bowling's "Legirons" resulting from a miners' strike, timber and mining strike before the election of the Scullin Government, etc.) proving that the "floating vote" (the middle strata) follows the working class when the latter fights monopoly capitalism.

A comparison between the Russian and German proletarian movements vividly illustrates these points.

Owing to the deep split in the working-class caused by the treachery of the Social-Democratic Party, the German workers were unable, after the end of the first world war, to conduct the persistent strike struggles and other forms of class war that the Russian workers did which led to the Russian Revolution. The Social-Democratic traitors again prevented mass political strikes, and the general strike at the time when the German financiers were preparing to place Hitler in power. As the German working-class was unable to conduct a determined and persistent struggle, to organise big strike movements, the middle strata could see little hope of the workers wresting power from the monopoly capitalists and land-owners.

This enabled Hitler, posing as an energetic champion of the middle strata, to win them for fascism, to deprive the working-class, split by the Social-Democrats, of allies. From this resulted the defeat of the German workers and the dire consequences of this defeat for the whole world.

The struggle of the workers, particularly mass strike movements, "arouses the masses."

This emphasises the importance of good Trade Union work and properly conducted strike movements.

The general run of strikes in Australia have been of an economic character, or confined to economic demands, by the reformists. Political strikes have been few in number

(Port Kembla, against scrap iron for Japan, for the release of Ratliffe and Thomas, against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in the U.S.A. and possibly a few more). Political strikes are a higher form of struggle than economic strikes. Such strikes challenge the Government, the State, the rule of the capitalist class. One of our chief Trade Union tasks is the politicalisation of strikes.

Strikes are also important in that they reveal the class-line-up to the more backward workers. The bourgeoisie, its press and politicians, and most of the parsons all unite to fight the strikers with every possible weapon. The law, the police, even the army, are used to crush the workers. The reformists oppose the strikers and thus expose themselves. The hypocritical mask is off. In a flash, the real character of the capitalist State is revealed to the masses.

THE NEED FOR GENERALSHIP IN STRIKES

Strikes do not always, automatically and necessarily, lead to progressive developments among the workers concerned.

Here I wish to emphasise the need for generalship. Those who are leading the strike must regard it as a battle, in which they, the leaders, must carefully estimate the strength of the enemy at any given moment, must realise the need to manoeuvre, the need for good tactical leadership, to be able to understand when the strike has been definitely lost; to be able to retreat while the strikers are still not divided and demoralised, to be able to prevent the exposure of the workers to undue punishment, in the event of the loss of the strike, and so on.

The example of a lost strike and bad generalship which led to lamentable results is, in recent times, the conduct, in N.S.W., of the Timber Workers' Strike of 1929-30. This was a very important strike, it was one of the biggest struggles of the workers in defence of their conditions during the capitalist onslaught on the Australian standard of living during the depression years. It had many arresting and spectacular features, the mass pickets, the burning of the ballot papers in connection with the secret vote ordered by Judge Lukin ("for" or "against" the strike, an attempt by the Arbitration Court to break the strike) numbers of arrests, action against scabs, etc.

The strike lasted for nine months before it was finally called off. The workers were exhausted. The Union in N.S.W. has shown little life since then and is in the clutches of a hopelessly reactionary clique of officials. This is because there was poor generalship; the strike was continued long after it was lost and the workers had become tired and demoralised. The contraction of the industry as the consequence of the developing economic crisis of the time opened the way for widespread victimisation of the best elements in the industry.

The tragic outcome of the Timber Workers' Strike which had fired the imagination of the masses in its earlier stages, underlines the need for a careful examination of the strength of the Unionists and the employers, of the external and internal, the objective and subjective factors, the need for good tactics, the ability to manoeuvre, and the courage to make unpalatable decisions once it is clear that the tide of battle has definitely commenced to flow against the workers.

THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1917

The strike of 1917 was an important event in the annals of our Trade Union movement, and not merely because it was the biggest strike numerically which spread over a whole series of industries and several States, and took on the proportions of a General Strike.

In the first place it was a protest by the workers against the imperialist war which had been proceeding for three years, the worsened conditions caused by that war, and the militancy engendered by the struggle against military conscription. Its general strike character was influenced by the agitation and propaganda of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, who put forward the view that capitalism could be conquered by the General Strike alone.

The I.W.W. agitation for the General Strike was fairly widespread at that time. The I.W.W., however, because of their sectarian refusal to work inside the Craft Unions were unable to lead, organise or guide the course of the strike. The leadership of the strike was in the hands of the reformists, who did everything to limit it and to prevent it, above all, becoming a political strike, a challenge to the Capitalist State, a struggle for power.

Leninism teaches us that a general strike, that is, a strike in all or most of the basic industries, as distinct from a general strike in one industry, must as a rule be a political mass strike. It is often necessary to broaden out partial strikes and aim to transform them also into political mass strikes. Our Party, because of this, would call for such stoppages only in the most favourable conditions, particularly a revolutionary or near-revolutionary situation. Usually, in ordinary situations, our tactics are a one-day general stoppage or a series of such one-day stoppages, as Engels and Lenin opposed the "economic" general strike of the Anarchists.

The 1917 strike resulted, primarily because of its reformist leadership, in defeat, in a bad setback for the Unions. Many of the Unions did not recover from the defeat for years, and even to-day the cry is raised that 1917 proved the "futility of strikes." It did not, but it further demonstrated the rottenness of reformist leadership and the incapacity of such Anarchist and sectarian groups as the I.W.W. to take over the leadership of the working-class. It confirmed Lenin's estimation of the General Strike as a revolutionary weapon.

HOW REFORMISM BREAKS STRIKES

The seamen were heavily defeated in the strike of 1935. This strike was an excellent example of the betrayals to which the reformists are prepared to stoop. The N.S.W. A.L.P. Executive, dominated by the Lang Inner Group, treacherously decided that this strike must be defeated at all costs in order, as they thought, to put an end to the growth of strikes led by Communists. The reformist Union officials implementing this policy isolated the striking seamen, instructing their members to work ships manned by scab crews.

As a result of this betrayal, the Union was seriously weakened and it took several years of persistent and patient work and correct policies on the part of the Communists to re-unite the seamen and re-established the strength of the Union.

In the "Depression" years strike-breaking was the general policy of the bureaucracy. Lang and the A.W.U. bureaucracy, for example, sent scabs to Queensland to break a shearers' strike. The reformist policy ensured the defeat

of th Northern N.S.W. coalminers. The Party had a great task in combating this widespread betrayal. The Party countered by organising rank and file strike committees to prevent official strike-breaking, establishing the widest democracy, and rank and file control of the conduct of the strikes. In addition, of course, they widely exposed the role of the reformists, who were openly protecting capitalism and assisting the capitalists to place the burdens of the raging economic crises on the shoulders of the working-class.

This object lesson of the role of the reformist officials, which was also the role of the Labor Governments of the time, must never be forgotten by us. It is identical with the role played by the European Social-Democrats, which Lenin never tired of exposing, and which produced such dire results for the working-class.

STRIKE-BREAKING AND PICKETING

Strike-breaking is a big problem in regard to strikes. The workers on strike, if they are to be successful in the struggle, must prevent production through the employment of scabs. In addition to publicity, in support of their case, the main Trade Union answer to strike-breakers is the mass picket to prevent them entering the work-place.

There has been a definite weakness noticeable in regard to picketing and measures against strike-breakers in some recent strikes in this country, in comparison with the picketing organised by the C.I.O. in the U.S.A. immediately before the present war. Strike-breakers are a real menace; they break down the strikers' morale in that they make the latter fearful about the possibility of being re-employed at the end of the strike and, if strike-breaking is on a sufficiently wide scale (as happened in seamen and water-side strikes), breaking the strike. The fight against scabs is therefore a prime task of the strike leadership. Nor is it good to leave the task of dealing with scabs to a small group of fighters among the strikers. The political mobilisation of all the strikers for the struggle against strike-breakers must be the aim. In addition, wide mass support, especially from other unions and the unemployed organisations, must be organised.

The problem of the strike-breakers often remains after the conclusion of the strikes, especially when there are large numbers of them. Many of them scabbed because of

real want in their homes, because of prolonged unemployment; others are backward workers misled by capitalist slander of the strikers, etc. The task is to win them back to the Labor movement, if at all possible. Otherwise, the workers in the particular enterprise or industry are divided, the boss has a powerful weapon to hand, the workers are weakened and progress is hindered. Experience shows that often those misled workers can be won back to Trade Unionism. The position is different with chronic or more or less professional scabs, who are always at the disposal of the boss to break strikes. These must be driven from the industry.

Unions should always be careful not to give the impression that it is the Union that stands between the unemployed worker and a job, that the Union is a "job-trust," confining employment in the particular industry to a chosen privileged few. If this were the case, then it is more than likely that backward workers will think that at last they see their chance to get a job and smash the Union which they regard as an obstacle to their employment, when a strike is called and the bosses are calling for "free" labor.

We must remember that Karl Marx wrote in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" that competition (for jobs) continually breaks down the unity of the workers, and strike-breakers are converted into such precisely by the competition in the labor market.

Strike-breakers must be resolutely dealt with during strikes, but, also, correct measures should be taken in connection with them when the strike is over.

WORKING DAYS LOST THROUGH STRIKES IN AUSTRALIA

1913	.....	623,528
1917	.....	4,599,658
1919	.....	6,308,226
1920	.....	1,872,065
1926	.....	1,310,261
1929	.....	4,461,478
1930	.....	1,511,241
1935	.....	495,124
1938	.....	1,337,994
1939	.....	459,154

PART FOUR

ORGANISATIONAL FORMS OF THE T.U. MOVEMENT THE A.C.T.U.

THE Communist Party was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

Previous to the formation of the A.C.T.U. in 1921, with the exception of a few strong Federal Unions, the connections between the Trade Union movement in the various States were loose and weak. This meant that there was no central general Trade Union policy on a national basis no proper co-ordination in action between the Trade Union movement in the different States. To ensure the rectification of these grave weaknesses and deficiencies in policy and organisation, the Party proposed, soon after its own formation, an all-Australian Executive and a National Congress of the Trade Union movement to formulate policy and guide the industrial struggle, a Trade Union national centre after the pattern of the English Trade Union Congress and the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions. This proposal received wide support, compelling the A.L.P. to call a Conference at which its setting up was endorsed.

The A.C.T.U. has been controlled by the reformists. Reformist control has prevented the A.C.T.U. from functioning as it should, has often indeed used it as a brake on the militancy of the working-class. Reformism has kept the A.C.T.U. weak and prevented it becoming the real, powerful centre of Trade Unionism it was meant to be and should be. Nevertheless, the militants have often been able to win a majority at the A.C.T.U. Congresses and to have progressive policies adopted by these Congresses, thus influencing the whole of the Trade Unions in a proper direction.

Impatient comrades sometimes demand the abolition of the A.C.T.U., naming it the "grave-yard of strikes." This is a wrong attitude. The real fight is obviously to end reformist control of the A.C.T.U., just as this is the real need in a number of important Unions and Labor Councils. With the ending of reformist control and the substitution of militant progressive leadership, the A.C.T.U. will be rapidly strengthened to become the most important directing centre of the Trade Unions, functioning on a national scale and co-ordinating the activities of the Unionists' right throughout the whole country.

The Labor Councils, both State and local, are also vitally important leading centres of the T.U. movement. These centres also need the utmost attention. Like the A.C.T.U., they too are mostly shackled by reformism.

THE A.W.U.

The Australian Workers' Union has always played an important part in the affairs of the Labor movement.

In its early days, first as the Shearers' Union, the A.W.U. played a most militant part and was one of the pioneer fighting forces which further developed the foundations of the mass Labor movement as we know it to-day. The struggles of the rural workers, in the '80's and '90's of the last century, are a bright page in the history of Labor, marking its broadening out and the commencement of the really mass movement against capitalism.

Later, the A.W.U., falling into the hands of a reactionary bureaucracy, was discredited in the eyes of many Trade Unionists. This bureaucracy crushed the old militant fighting spirit of the rural workers and reduced the Union to an appendage of the bosses' Arbitration Court. The bureaucracy, shouting about Arbitration, collaborates with the squatters and other bosses to break the strikes of its own members, often recruiting scabs for this purpose. The chieftains of this bureaucracy, over-paid union officials, are usually past-masters in the art of A.L.P. factional intrigue to secure control of that Party and place themselves in Parliament. The A.W.U. bureaucrats ruthlessly suppress all progressive expression in the Union, using the weapons of victimisation, expulsion and slander. Members allege that ballots of the A.W.U., whenever there is a serious challenge, are often faked.

The bureaucracy is able to maintain control because of the scattered membership, the decisive sections being unable to meet because of the hundreds of miles separating the sheds, stations, farms and public works, etc., on which these members are employed. Progressive motions and protests by groups of A.W.U. workers are usually ignored.

In N.S.W., where the A.W.U. was once as numerically strong as in Queensland, it now has a relatively small membership.

This is due to past corruption and reactionary policies especially in the days of the Bailey bureaucracy. The Bailey bureaucracy relied on State controlled compulsory Unionism

and, when compulsory Unionism was revoked by a U.A.P. Government in N.S.W., the A.W.U. literally fell to pieces. The result in N.S.W. is that tens of thousands of former A.W.U. members became unorganised, refusing to join the A.W.U. voluntarily, and only after some twenty years this position has started to improve. Unionists cannot be compulsorily made; the backward workers, as a rule, can only be convinced by results, by gains in conditions and living standards won by progressive Trade Union activity. That is why there is not compulsory Unionism in the U.S.S.R. Coercion tends to turn the politically backward masses against Unionism. On the other hand, Unions are justified, where a job is almost 100% organised, in taking measures to force a few recalcitrants to join the Unions. PREFERENCE to Unionists is a better alternative to compulsory Unionism.

The A.W.U. also maintains bad relations with other Trade Unions. It sets itself up as a rival centre to the Australian Congress of Trade Unions, refusing generally to collaborate with that body. The A.W.U. splits the workers by poking itself in everywhere: metal, mining, manufacture, etc., and "body-snatching" membership from other Unions. This creates a strong antagonism against the A.W.U. amongst the Craft Unions, especially in the big industrial centres.

The A.W.U. officialdom has also played a reactionary role in the politics of the Labor Party. Many of the Parliamentary leaders have been former A.W.U. officials. Their influence has been of the most reactionary Rightwing character. They have also been in the centre of A.L.P. intrigue, factionalism and corruption.

The A.W.U. is a very important Union. It embraces the bulk of the rural proletariat. **These rural proletarians are the backbone of the Labor movement in the countryside and the STARTING POINT FOR THE POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF THE COUNTRY MASSES.** Besides the rural workers, the A.W.U. embraces large numbers of the lower paid workers in and around the towns.

The defeat of the A.W.U. bureaucracy and elimination of its reactionary influence, the removal of the running sore of its corruption from the body of the Labor movement, is an important Trade Union task requiring a lot of attention. The A.W.U. can and must be restored to its former proud place as one of the main fighting organisations of the Australian proletariat.

THE WEAKNESSES OF CRAFT UNIONS

Trade Unionism in Australia has developed almost entirely on Craft lines. The Communist Party regards these Craft divisions as a source of weakness and disunity hindering the growth of revolutionary strength and political consciousness. The Crafts also foster reformist ideology and strengthen the grip of the Arbitration Court system on Unionism. The Craft divisions create differences in policy and conflicts between Unions, thus dividing the workers. "Demarcation" and other inter-Union disputes tend to sap the unity of the workers. These Craft divisions can and do lead to one Union "scabbing" on another during strikes. Some Unions call strikes without the slightest effort at consultation or the harmonising of policy, strikes which automatically place large numbers of other workers in the same industry out of employment, creating thereby resentment and disunity. The crafts perpetuate the "snobbish" outlook of the skilled towards the unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

Because of these weaknesses of the Craft Union system the Communists strive towards higher forms of industrial organisation of the working class, i.e., Shop Committees and Industrial Unionism.

By Industrial Unionism is meant that all the workers in a given industry (e.g. coal-mining) are organised in one Union irrespective of Craft or Trade.

One of the bigger tasks in the Trade Union movement of the country is that of replacing the existing Craft form of organisation with organisation "by shop," i.e., by the establishment of Industrial Unions.

The best method to achieve this is by means of the amalgamation of the existing Craft Unions.

The reformists sometimes distort our proposals for Industrial Unions to mean that the Communists wish to "smash the Unions." We must carefully combat this reformist distortion and show the workers, by clear and concise arguments, how Industrial Unionism would greatly strengthen the Unions and simplify policy and organisation.

The opponents of Industrial Unionism are the reformists, who greatly fear the increased militancy of the workers which would grow out of increased unity and strength. The reformist officials also fear the loss of their jobs as a

result of the effect Industrial Unionism would have in undermining the bureaucratic grip and dictatorial control established by these official cliques in a number of the Craft Unions.

To combat this latter obstacle, the Communists are often agreeable to guaranteeing these officials a certain tenure of office in the amalgamated Union, in order to establish the main principle, i.e., organisation by shop, by industry. Other such tactical measures may be resorted to as the conditions in a Union, or group of Unions, where there are possibilities of amalgamation, may warrant.

THE SHOP COMMITTEE

Organising for Shop Committees in the factories is a foremost task of the Communists.

The Shop Committees are basic Trade Union organs and must not be viewed either as substitutes for, nor opposition to, the Trade Union.

The Shop Committees strengthen the ties between the Union and the workers on the job, and between Unions in the same industry, when they are functioning correctly. It should be specially noted that the Shop Committees will be the basic organisational unit of the future industrial Unions. The Shop Committees in the first place defend and improve the conditions of the workers in the factory.

The Shop Committees play a most important role in the preparation and mobilisation of the workers for strike action. They play an important role in leading the strike and combating betrayal and reformist misleadership.

In a revolutionary situation, the Shop Committees would be one of the chief instruments for drawing the whole of the working-class into the fight, into the street, and the general revolutionary struggle.

After the seizure of political power by the workers, the Shop Committee's role is again extraordinarily important. The Shop Committees, together with the Party Branch in the factories, realise workers' control of industry; they lead the work of economic reconstruction and the raising of the level of Socialist production in the work-places. The tasks of the Shop Committees in the Soviet Union are very comprehensive. Not only do they strive to raise production, but they, of course, look after the economic interests of the workers (wages, hours, conditions). They are also charged

with much of the care for the cultural, educational, social, sporting and recreational needs of the workers, and they now control social insurance. Such is the importance of the Shop Committee movement before, during and after the revolution, in preparing, winning and consolidating Socialism!

Party comrades, therefore, must set about preparations for establishing a factory Committee where one does not exist, and strengthening and guiding it where it does exist. The Shop Committee movement in Australia was weak and has only really commenced to grow under the influence of our Party. The reformists do not like Shop Committees and often prevent setting them up or, failing in this, hinder their work. The way must be carefully prepared for the setting up of Shop Committees. The best and most influential workers should, first of all, be won for the idea through preparatory propaganda, both printed and oral.

Shop Committees should be representative of all workers employed in the undertaking. Communists must not lose sight of the United Front when considering support for nominees to these Committees.

The structure of Shop Committees may vary. The best form is that consisting of delegates elected by each department in the plant, or elected by a mass meeting of all workers; but it is wrong to be rigid and reject other forms. In some cases a composition acceptable to the workers and Unions may be that of delegates representing each Union with members on the job.

In other instances, the starting point may be the coming together of the stewards of the Unions with members in the plant. Such a committee, ratified by a mass meeting or endorsed by the Union groups concerned, is a good form.

PART FIVE

UNIONS AS UNITED FRONT ORGANS

THE Trade Unions are vital centres for the building of the United Front of the working-class. Here, as well as on the jobs, are masses of workers who support the A.L.P., as well as workers "outside politics" (Lenin), politically unconscious workers. With them we build the basic unity of the working-class. United action between the

militants and the reformist minded workers is a day-to-day necessity. Otherwise the Union would be split, action would be impossible and the workers paralysed. In the Trade Unions the foundations of unity is laid, which will in the end compel the A.L.P. to agree to the United Front of the political parties—Communist Party-A.L.P. united action.

We have noted throughout this study of Trade Unionism the role of Reformism; its basis in the Labor "aristocracy," its opposition to Marxist theory, to the class struggle, its detrimental effect upon the unity, and correct organisation of the working-class. The reformist leaders were characterised by Lenin as the "bourgeois in the Labor movement," as "Labor lieutenants of capital," as the enemies of the Socialist Revolution. Stalin has pointed out that the Socialist revolution cannot be achieved unless Social-democratic reformism has been crushed within the ranks of organised Labor.

This recognition of their role, however, it is well-known, does not preclude the United Front, in favourable circumstances and for given aims, with the Right-wing Trade Union leaders, any more than it does with the leaders of the Australian Labor Party, who are also reformists.

The aim of such United Front agreements "from above" is to unite in action the revolutionary-minded and reformist-minded workers and, in struggle, to strengthen the ties between them, thus making it easier for the workers who follow the reformist leaders to understand what a revolutionary policy means, consequently making it easier for them to support such a policy.

There are other periods when it is necessary to mercilessly fight against the policy of the reformist leaders. In these periods of acute class struggle within the Labor movement, to avoid sectarian errors and leftism, it is essential for us to adopt a concrete approach to the Union membership, i.e., never to confuse, or lump together, the reformist leaders and the rank and file, the workers in the organisations which they dominate. These periods are periods of the United Front "from below," and the aim is to win the workers for a fighting policy, not to drive them away by regarding them as "reactionaries" because they are misled into acting against the interests of their class by reformism. The lack of such a concrete approach has

been a fruitful source of sectarian errors in regard to the work and likewise towards the lower ranks of the Trade Union officials in the past.

Comrade Dimitrov has time and again drawn our attention to the differentiation that takes place within the ranks of reformism, particularly in periods of political tension; to the differences between those whom he once called the "top leaders" and the lower officials. Many, perhaps most, of these latter are honest in their intentions towards the working-class. We must have a different, friendly approach towards these officials in contrast to that we adopt towards the obvious traitors and bureaucrats, the leaders of reformist policy.

At the same time we cannot compromise with the reformist's views of the lower reformist functionaries.

When Stalin spoke of "crushing reformism" he did so in the sense of reformism as a political policy, as a harmful, bourgeois trend in the Labor movement. While we are friendly towards honest reformists, we cannot adopt a conciliatory attitude towards their political views, because reformism as a political policy, means the disastrous defeat of the Labor movement, its ruin. While combating their views, we must do this in comradely fashion, maintaining friendly personal relations and unity with them in the fight to advance Unionism.

In the Unions, besides the reformists, are various groups, such as the Catholics. Our policy is not to attack the Catholic religion, but to win the big majority of Catholic workers for a working-class policy. Among Catholics, however, are bitter enemies of progress and Socialism, workers misled by the anti-Socialist policy of that Church's Hierarchy. These sections, a small fanatical minority of the Catholics, must be exposed and isolated, not on the basis of the religious beliefs of their Church, or by branding all Catholics as reactionaries, but by showing that the factional activities and the reactionary policies of individuals and groups among them, are harmful to the progress of Labor and an obstacle to the achievement of the workers' objective. Catholic workers, as a body, have always been, in their great majority, loyal to their class and have contributed greatly to the strength of the Labor movement.

Trade Union workers have a great responsibility in creating the United Front of all workers, which is a central aim of the Communists. Without a united working-class movement Socialism is not possible.

THE STRUGGLE FOR A CORRECT POLICY IN THE WAR AGAINST FASCISM

The war of the democratic peoples against the fascist enslavers faced the Australian Trade Union movement with quite new tasks. In order to defeat the fascists, the utmost power and strength of the democratic peoples had to be exerted.

Vast armies had to be equipped with modern weapons in huge quantities in order even to meet on equal terms the fascist armored hordes.

In addition to providing a large section of the armed forces, the working-class, whose prospects of achieving Socialism, or even maintaining existing standards of living, would be wrecked by a fascist victory, had to produce these enormous supplies of armaments. The Soviet workers, long in control of the industries, were interested in questions of production and greater efficiency and output from the industries since the first day of the victory of the October Revolution.

The Australian Trade Unionists, however, were now faced with problems of stepping up production while the capitalist economy continued in existence, posing a difficult and complicated problem for the working-class leadership.

The Communists took a leading part in convincing the workers of the need for a great industrial effort in order to preserve democratic liberties.

The workers had to take up questions of efficiency in the factory. Co-operation between the Shop Committees and the management for production was essential. Strikes had to be reduced to a minimum and only resorted to under direct threat from refractory managements to union organisation and basic conditions. Many Union regulations had to be waived, such as opposition to overtime, dilution of Labor, etc., and every effort made to settle industrial disputes peaceably.

The class struggle had undergone one of its transformations. The centre of gravity of world progress was focussed around the defeat of the fascist powers, the precondition of all future progress.

Increased production, efficiency, continuity of work, were now as important as strikes in other phases of development. This constituted the new forms of the class struggle. In this phase the workers undoubtedly gained valuable experience for future Socialist construction.

The reformists tried to use the slogans of the Party, when these were first raised, to discredit Communism. Demagogues talked as if fascism could be defeated without strenuous effort and sacrifices. These cheap popularity seekers were soon exposed by the increasing gravity of the situation and the workers began to see that the Left was putting forward a realistic policy.

Reformist elements in the coal-mining industry often joined hands with the mine managements in creating industrial disputes with a view to destroying the militant leadership of the Miners' Union.

Some coal-field reformists, by promoting strikes, played into the hands of the most reactionary U.A.P. politicians who, through the mine-owners, were creating trouble in order to undermine the Curtin Government and bring the extreme reaction back into governmental authority, and, to a lesser extent, the role of reformists in other industries was equally sorry. Those who were not "crooks," deliberately playing a dirty game, lacked sufficient political understanding to realise the great issues at stake in the war against fascism. Their narrow, limited outlook would not allow them to see beyond the parochial limits of their own industry. The Federal Labor Government, it is true, was demanding a full war effort, but from a purely bourgeois standpoint, and by bourgeois methods which, naturally, failed to fully mobilise the workers in the conscious determined way needed, and it was only as the Government tended more to rely on the Unions that the workers' confidence in the Labor Government increased.

Reformist leadership in the Trade Unions in yet another great crisis had showed itself inadequate, limited in vision, narrow and often corrupt, prepared to play the reactionaries game.

In the mine-fields and elsewhere the reformist saboteurs were aided by, and used as tools, the "anarchistic lefts," crude unorganised militants, lacking a basic political understanding, without ambition to learn and who never, because

of their backwardness, join the Party. Their stupidity embarrassed the Party and assisted the Right. Such "militants," who show themselves incorrigible over a period of years, are not a help but a hindrance. In most cases, a fight against their influence is the condition for Party and Trade Union advance.

However, the overwhelming majority of the miners and other Unionists supported a correct war policy after much strenuous work on the part of the Party and other genuine Trade Union workers, rejecting the reformist "strike leaders" and "left anarchists" alike.

PART SIX

CONCLUSION

MANAGERS OF ECONOMIC LIFE IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY

LENIN indicated the final tasks of the Trade Unions, their new functions after the working-class is in power, under the Proletarian Dictatorship, as managers of industry when classless, Socialist society is on the order of the day:—

"But the development of the proletariat did not, and could not, anywhere in the world proceed by any other road than that of the Trade Unions with their mutual activity with the working-class Party. The seizing of political power by the proletariat as a class is a gigantic step forward, and it is incumbent upon the Party to educate the Trade Unions in a new manner distinct from the old one, to guide them, not forgetting meanwhile that they remain, and will remain, for a long time a necessary 'school of Communism,' a preparatory school for the training of the proletariat to realise their dictatorship, an indispensable Union of the worker for the permanent transfer of the management of the country's economic life (my emphasis, L.S.) into their hands as a class (and not to single trades), to be given later into the hands of all the laboring masses."

In "Left-Wing Communism" Lenin outlines the position of the Trade Unions in relation to the Proletarian Dictatorship:—

"The Interrelations between leaders—party—class—masses, as well as the relation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its party to the trade unions, now present themselves concretely in Russia in the following form. The dictatorship is exercised by the proletariat which is organised in the Soviets and is led by the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) . . . In its work the Party relies directly on the trade unions." (Page 31, International Book Shop edition.)

Lenin then explains how the Communist Party leads the Trade Unions, and continues:—

"Thus is obtained, on the whole, a formally non-Communist, flexible, comparatively extensive and very powerful proletarian apparatus, by means of which the Party is closely connected with the class and the masses, and by means of which, under the guidance of the Party, class dictatorship is realised. Without the closest connection with the Trade Unions, whose hearty support and self-sacrificing work aid the construction not only of the economic, but also of the military organisation, it would have been, of course, impossible to govern the country and to maintain the dictatorship for two and a half years or even for two and a half months."

In the programme of the Communist International, adopted at the Sixth World Congress in 1928, the teachings of Lenin in relation to the Trade Unions are summarised as follows:—

"Under capitalism, the mass Labor organisations, in which the broad masses of the proletariat were originally organised and trained, i.e., the Trade (Industrial) Unions, serve as the principal weapons in struggle against trustified capital and its State. Under the proletarian dictatorship they become transformed into the principal lever of the State; they become transformed into a school of Communism, by means of which vast masses of the proletariat are drawn into the work of Socialist management of production; they

are transformed into organisations directly connected with all parts of the State apparatus, influencing all branches of its work."

"That which made Red October possible was the fact that the banner of proletarian revolt was at the same time the banner of the Trade Union movement in Russia. The Soviet Republic triumphed over its innumerable foes, because the Trade Unions, which united the whole working-class of Russia, gave the proletarian government all possible support.

"The Soviet Republic of Russia will stand all trials, will triumph over all its enemies, because the banner of Communism is the banner of the Trade Union movement in Russia."

—Message from the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions on the occasion of its fifth anniversary, July 3rd, 1922.

And Socialism in Australia can triumph only when the banner of the Trade Unions is the "Banner of Communism."

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