



labor

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WHITHER?

BY "TOUCHSTONE."

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"Out in the West," I am told, "the men are no longer Socialists. Unionism and Labourism are living



forces, green and growing plants, vigorous, virile; but Socialism is a ring-barked tree whitening rapidly to its death."

I wonder is it so. I am a Town-dweller; my ear is not attuned to the heart whispers of the Bush. I cannot tell. But I fear me there is something in it. I know there is less Socialism in the towns than there was ten years ago—much less—and there are indications that the decay of Socialistic thought has not been confined within the municipal fences.

The Labour Party is still a Socialist Party, because it makes for Progress, and all Progress is Socialism.

BUT ITS SOCIALISM IS NOT AVOWED. It is not proclaimed from its platforms to ring throughout the land as the Gospel of Glad Tidings. It is mentioned, if ever, with bated breath, lest the re-

porters might hear. Often it is repudiated; oftener still, and worse still, it is ignored.

All Progress is Socialism—of a sort. But the best Socialism is **CONSCIOUS SOCIALISM**, recognising whither it is going, rejoicing at every advance; intelligently, enthusiastically utilising every means at hand to accelerate the movement forward.

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I am not a pessimist. I have too great a faith in the Future to view with a gloomy eye the Present out of which it must evolve.

But the Fool in revolt would be no wiser than the Philosopher forging apologies for his chains if he failed to note the weaknesses and errors of the Revolution and point them out to his brother Fools with a firm finger.

And the Labour Movement, it seems to me, is bereft of the Socialistic inspirations which gave it birth. It is no longer, I fear, fired by the ideals of Social Justice, the conviction of social wrongs, which set its veins throbbing and its heart beating high twelve years ago.

There are Socialists in the ranks still—many of them—but the mass is not permeated with the Thought

that saves, and the leaders are mostly indifferent or timorous, where not covertly hostile.

It is a pity, ten thousand pities, for the Movement's sake, and for the sake of all that the Movement means to every one of us. For the Socialistic State is our destined home, our haven, and any drifting away is a divergence from the true course. And always there is looming ahead the task of finding the way back.

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The feeling for Socialism is the instinct for natural right. Antagonism to it is a violation of primal impulses, and can only be attributed to misconception, to false training, to counsels of error.

The first principles of the Socialist's Creed are as obvious as the sun in the sky, as essential to justice as food is to life.

So simple are its basic propositions that the intellect of a child can compass them.

Everything a man produces unaided is his own.

Everything two men produce by their conjoined efforts belongs to those two men.

Everything a number of men produce together is the property of that number.

Everything produced by Society as a whole belongs to Society as a whole.

Those who produce nothing own nothing.

That which is produced by no man is owned by no man.

The opportunities of Nature belong equally to all.

The fruits of labour belong to the labourer.

A number of men working in co-operation will produce more than

the same number working as independent units in opposition to one another.

It is better to work together and share together, than to fight and rob one another for a living.

Those are the simple fundamentals of Socialism. All else is but elaboration. *They* need no argument. The healthy mind assents to them as naturally as the healthy body acquiesces in the physical facts of its existence.

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Now take another step in the scale of reasoning.

Here is the Earth—a beautiful place; luxuriant, prodigal of gifts; land, sea, air, teeming with fruitfulness; with riches inexhaustible, waiting only for the magic touch of Labour to minister to the pleasure and well-being of men.

Nature refuses nothing that is for our good. We suffer only through our sins. Famine to-day is the aftermath of extravagance or folly yesterday. Flood, drought, frost, destroying cyclone—all these are local and temporary phenomena. Elsewhere there are compensating harvests.

Never at any time in the history of this circling sphere has there been real want—unpreventable want. Nature is the beneficent Mother-God; Labour the efficacious prayer to which She never turns a heedless ear.

Why is it then that millions perish of hunger? Why is there misery and vice and crime, springing like loathsome fungi from Poverty's poisoned soil?

Why are the cities and towns rotted to the bone with a leprosy of sorrow and sin?

Why is the Bush haunted with the horror of a social tragedy? Why does it brood with a melancholy madness, as though the shadow of some unutterable woe lay like a curse upon it?

Is it Nature's fault that the gaunt legions of the unemployed march in an endless procession of wretchedness through the streets?

Is it Nature's fault that Frankenstein monsters slink in the slums—ghastly semblances of souls; human masks, with the sacred flame of intellect extinguished, or flickering feebly like a spent candle in its socket?

Is it Nature's fault that weary swagmen tramp the lonely tracks out back, searching for the toil that yields no more than the barest sustenance?

Is it Nature's fault that men who have grown racked in body and morbid in mind in the lonely watches of the wilderness should find no haven but Dunwich for their fallen years?

Anyone can see that there is something wrong. And anyone can see, if they have eyes to see, that the fault is OURS; that a few grab more than is good for them or for us; that Greed is the Scarlet Sin of this Babylon we call Society.

Anyone can see, too, if they are not blinded with prejudice, that the remedy is to get back as soon as may be to primitive principles. Salvation is always on the simple plan. Palliatives are complex; yet many palliatives won't cure one evil—they merely mitigate effects.

Industrial arbitration, old age pensions, factory laws, better accommodation, accident compensa-

tion—all these are palliatives, measures designed, not to sweep away, but to minimise the results of an evil system.

Under Socialism they would be unnecessary.

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I wish every Unionist and Labourite who looks askance at Socialist propaganda would ask himself this plain question—"WHITHER AM I GOING?"

No sensible man should be content to press on blindly, ignorant of his destination—chartless, with no compass in his hand, no star in the sky to guide him. Every thinking Democrat must desire a goal, so that he may shape all his efforts to attain it, and know the paths to avoid.

And if the Ultimate of the Labour movement be not Socialism, what is it?

I have the original manifesto of the A.L.F. before me. It is boldly, uncompromisingly Socialistic. Of all the public documents ever drafted in Queensland, that is the grandest in my view. It strikes at the root of the social curse; it holds aloft the noblest ideal that ever brought tears of emotion to the eyes of men.

It has never been repealed. It is the manifesto of the A.L.F. still. But its ethics, I am told, have fallen into neglect. Our politicians don't talk about them—some of them detest to hear them mentioned. They pride themselves upon their practical commonsense, and Socialism they regard as a beautiful dream or a hateful chimera.

Yet in what direction does Labour legislation tend? If not

towards increasing the Labourer's share in the products of his labour, if not towards curtailing the power of the Profitmonger, we are woefully wasting our time. But if that be its tendency, then in so far it is Socialistic.

What is wanted, however, is not unconscious Socialism, but the cool, calm, deliberate, insistent Socialism of men who know what they are after, and will never permit themselves, in the hurly-burly of the fight for the needs of the day to forget the objects of the morrow; the Socialism of men who see the track before them, and will not be diverted from it, or lured from it, by side issues and decoys.

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WHITHER? There is no joy for Labour if Socialism be not the goal. The hope of the Better Days to come, when fraternalism shall rule the land, alone can colour the gray monotony of indus-

trial servitude, alone can sweeten the grim struggle for existence.

It is good to band together as mates to resist the aggression of the Boss—but better to have no Boss to resist, and be mates still. It is good to protect the factory slave, and the station slave, and the wage-slave everywhere—but better to strike the irons from their limbs, and set them free to face Nature with a smile, strong in the sense of their own mastership.

Let us, as Unionists and Labourites, search for the truth, and serve it loyally when we find it. WHITHER? I, for one, feel in every fibre of my being that there will never be fair days, never be heart's ease, never be any abiding joy in life, until the conviction grows upon us that Socialism is coming like a flower-crowned bride to meet us, and that we are active agents, everyone of us, in harmony with eternal forces making for Justice and Righteousness.

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