

‘What We Really Want’, 1895

Wild talk, the spontaneous response to the challenge of the enemy, may to some extent retard the progress of the Labour movement; but it is hard for men daily brought face to face with the seamy side of life to refrain from strong language. Such men know that distress exists, distress which an alteration in our laws only can remedy, and some allowance must be made for fiery utterance. We are willing to take our share of the blame for injudicious writings, but in doing so we plead with the mass of non-partisan readers to inquire closely into the wrongs which require redress, and into the modes by which the Labour Party and this journal—which is an ally of the Labour Party—propose that the wrongs should be remedied ...

We do not ask that all our political programme shall be set in operation at once by a single Parliament. We know that it cannot be, such a thing being contrary to the laws of evolution and that spirit of compromise which is said to be civilisation itself. Because we range ourselves under the flag of ‘Socialism in our Time’, we cannot expect to realise a perfect Collectivist State in our day any more than the follower of Christ who marches behind the banner of Christianity can hope to become a perfect Christian, or to establish in his time on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

The phrase ‘Socialism in our Time’ was coined in the hope that, as the world is largely influenced by phrases, a euphonious motto, embodying the aspirations of the multitude, would furnish a rallying cry for the real reformers, and have the effect of driving the unreal pretenders into their proper camps. There are many politicians and parliamentary aspirants who declare their belief in Socialism, but only as a political system to be extended in somebody else's time. They pin their faith to the State and municipal co-operation—State and municipal Socialism—but it is a faith without works, to be put into practice ‘when the people are educated up to it’—in other words, when the present generation is mouldering in its grave ...

The people who work for wages, however, while they cannot hope for complete Socialism in their time, may surely be excused for demanding that a few legislative steps be taken in that direction. Our Queensland Parliament is standing still, so far as the social legislation which will directly improve the lot of the people is concerned. Our leading Cabinet Ministers appear to be afraid to touch reform, although they continue to make law after law of direct advantage to the people's employers and the captains of industry. Such heartless neglect and puerile timidity we believe is not shown by any other civilised country in the world. Besides our own sister colonies, stolid Germany, vivacious France, Conservative England, all move forward in the face of tremendous opposition of old associations and centuries of vested interests. Queensland, with its youth and its smothered strength, cannot advance because of the weight of politicians who belong to another age.

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p. 2. Reprinted in David Lovell, *Marxism and Australian Socialism before the Bolshevik Revolution*, p.259