CONSCRIPTION policy when he was TOO OLD TO GO HIMSELF. In the hustle of war, you may not have known these things because, when you fellows were here, all political parties, other than the Socialist Party of Australia, were cashing in on the blood bath, to make lots of money out of it; for instance, the Communist Party, which before the war was mooshing along on petty handouts, gathered enough from the war chest to purchase buildings and printing plants worth thousands of pounds.

The Federal Labor Party, with Ben Chifley now in the saddle, still rides rough-shod over the mob as it did during the war years.

What Goes on Down Here

Since the war finished there has been some interesting developments. The Labor Government has virtually scrapped the old Arbitration system administered by the same Judges and has substituted a body of "Conciliation Commissioners" who are supposed to smell out Industrial Disputes before they start and get up promptly. These highly paid fellows are mostly ex-union officials or Labor politicians and you should see them "conciliate." "Constitutional limitations" prevent them from doing "what they'd like to do" and so their faces are saved and, incidentally, so are the bosses' profits. The main functions of basic wage and hours fixation are still left in the hands of the Judges who sit back and contemptuously survey the antics of those who displace them.

As with all previous alterations in the Arbitration system the result is similar. Industrial disputes dominate the post-war scene and while the Federal Labor Government pursues a policy of "let the slaves burn up their war-time savings" in the hope that an impoverished working class will prove more amenable to the requirements of the current capitalist readjustment, the State governments adopt a more drastic and impatient policy.

"A Coup De Coup"

Here is the essence of the Queensland Labor Government's Act. The Arbitration Court is all-powerful in regard to Industrial Disputes and yet at the same time it can ignore itself and impose itself. It is beyond criticism and can construe union action, statement, argument or criticism as acts of itself. There is NO APPEAL from its slavish dictums a condition eminently suitable to the ex-labor officers who embalm their benches with even more aplomb than their judicial confreres.

Behind it, is the Police State of the Labor Party as was proven during the recent Railway dispute when, overnight, Labor Premier Hanlon handed over the State to the police. Newspapers and radio-stations were forbidden to publish or broadcast statements or resolutions relative to the strike.

Picketing and assemblies at certain places were punished: on the spot, by batons; in the Court, by fines and jail. But as one writer put it, "Hanlon's Coup de Coup should be put to the Capitalists that his ex-Party, demonstrates the possibility of THEIR EXPROPRIATION overnight. The lessons of history may be forgotten for a time but — they are never lost.

In Queensland, the Labor Government received full support from the Tories; in Victoria, the Liberal government had the tacit support of the Labor Party, so much so, that the Tory Premier agreed to give prior notice to the Labor Council of his intention to proclaim the Act. As usual, both governments claimed that they were merely protecting the "poor innocents," when in fact that Big Bad Wolf, the Communist Party. In each case, the government had a double win: they busted the strike and used the Communist bogey to butcher the Unions.

Communist Duplicit

As usual, the Communists came out with their fiery slogans, their declarations to fight until their demands were granted, etc., and, as usual, the "fight" was declared off with the promises unfilled. Some gains were made but much less than was declared to be the object of the strike. This, of course, is common to most industrial disputes but one thing stood out with regard to Queensland, namely, the demand for the rescinding of the "Emergency Powers." The Communists were very insistent that this be expunged from the Statute Book.

There were two outstanding reasons for this; the first being that while
the Bill stands, the opponents of the Communist Party hold the comrade partly responsible, because they told the workers to PUT THE LABOR PARTY INTO POWER. The second reason, (and probably the most glaring), why the Communists want the bill out of the way is to make easier their task at the next elections when they will once again advise workers to vote for the anti-working class Labor Party. Incidentally, it was pointed out, in the "Socialist Comment" March 1948, that the Communists support much more rigorous anti-strike legislation in the U. S. R.

Power Drunk

Perhaps the most significant feature of Labor Governments, apart from their drastic enforcement of existing powers, is their incessant striving after greater powers by altering the Constitution. At present, the Federal Labor Government is seeking a constitutional amendment to confer wider powers on Parliament in regard to rents and prices. It has already led to the Nationalization of Banking but this Act is being challenged in the High Court of Australia, which body has the judicial job of interpreting the Constitution, subject to approval by the British Privy Council. The decision of the High Court is being awaited at the time of writing.

We mention these points to emphasize Labor Party greed for power. This power-grasping becomes more menacing when one considers how Labor Governments of Australia have already exercised powers against the working class. Yet our Communist friends tell us that we should support the extension of Labor Party power, presumably, we take it, that we will make dictatorship so much easier if the Comrades ever make the top.

Dope Peddlers Arrive

As we write, we are being infected with the presence of an old crony of yours in the person of Cardinal Spellman who is cashing in on the growing antagonism towards the Soviet. At the Melbourne Town Hall, he told us:

"Soviet Russia, our war ally, has not rescued our ally for peace. The free countries must permit Soviet Russia to continue her policy of persecution and slaughter." (Sydney Morning Herald, May 4, 1948.)

This globe trotting peddler of Opium de Vatican conveniently forgets the deprivations of his little Catholic Dictator Dollis of Austria, the benign Benito Mussolini, with the benediction of the Holy Father, poison-gassed the helpless Abyssinian peasants in their defenceless native villages.

His Fellow-traveller, a Monsignor Sheen, told us that we had but one choice — Catholicism or Communism. Such a statement upset the Protestant Hierarchy which has already been much embarrassed by the pronouncements of the "Red Dean." What a future to contemplate — Rome or Moscow, a Black Pope or a Red one. As Australia has been ruled for many years by a Catholic Labor Cabinet, there may be something in the prognostications of the "riverind giantmen." These globe trotting peddlers of the Red Bogy with characteristic guile omit to mention that they kept the "bogey" on the ice when Stalin was playing ball with them during the recent blood bath.

The Unions

When the Communists were on the band-wagon muscling in on the war racket they made fair headway here and many of the Trade Unions are now officered by Communist officials. The Party many advantages such as control of union funds, control of union publications, and representation on the various trade union councils. Labor Party union officers are hampered by having to support and apologize for the anti-working class legislation of the Labor governments. In spite of the Party differences, Labor and Communist supporters run around together advocating support for the nationalization of banks and the Government's Constitution referendum.

Since the war the chief concession wrung from the ruling class here is the forty hour working week; in most cases, it is a five day week. Nominal wages are higher than pre-war but the purchasing power is much reduced. The governments are trying to cajole into the country as many immigrants as they can to increase the competition for jobs so that the slaves cannot obtain too many advantages from the comparatively favorable labor market.

The White Australia Policy forbids the entry of colored workers so that, at present, the boss is denied the use of the reservoirs of cheap Asiatic labor which is literally waiting on his door-step to be exploited. (It is said that when MacArthur had his "army of occupation" here he wanted to hold it to Chinese workers but the traditional fear of the so-called "Yellow Peril" swayed the government against it.)

While some here think the population is too small for the "safety of the country" they frown on any attempt to fill the spaces with European's rejects. Like "Dan McCann" they regard everybody as "furryerson" who comes from any place but that from which they or their forebears originated. But they still talk of the "Four Freedoms".

Socialism

The outlook for socialism is much the same. Most workers are duped by the Liberals, the Laborites, the Country Party or the Communists. And as there is little difference among these outfits that mean that most workers everywhere at present, are anti-socialist. They thus become easy victims of the "Red Bogy" propaganda of the Liberals, the empty slogans of the Communists and the mealy platitudes of the Labor Politicians. Catholic Action and Communist intrigue play a big role. And so the bewildered workers fly round in endless error, pushed from pillar to post, and are kidded that the best place for the boss is on their backs.

Under such confusing conditions we pursue our course of converting workers to a socialist outlook; a slow task, a difficult one, but a worthy one. As elsewhere, much of our time is taken up clearing away the mental cobwebs, dispelling the illusions, and preparing a basis for the understanding of Scientific Socialism. Our labor is not all in vain and the future is brighter than the political shadows portend.

We'll write you again sometime so if you're interested in what is happening down this way, keep an eye on "The Western Socialist" or request a free sample copy of the "Socialist Comment" from The W. S. P.

Yours for socialism,

A. N. AUSSIE

Sydney, Australia.

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