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THE SOCIALIST STANDARD

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UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

A LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA.

To those workers in the Old World who obtain their ideas of life under the Southern Cross from school primers and entertaining magazine articles written by Capitalistic globe-trotters, Australia is depicted as a land of wealth and wonder, a semi-tropical and tropical paradise, a land of opportunity for all. Mention of Australia to many in the Old Country begets romantic visions of verdant pasture lands, vast goldfields, gigantic sheep and cattle stations, and a golden sun forever setting on a happy and prosperous population. Lured by attractive stories peddled by professional tale-tellers in Australia House and other Immigration Bureaux, thousands of workers have sought to escape the sordidness of Old World Capitalism in the New World "down under."

In the early days of the pioneers certain opportunities existed in this country for the strong, energetic individuals who were prepared to battle with Nature and win the wealth from the soil and the mineral deposits. But times have changed, and the blighting hand of capitalism has obliterated some of the prettiest beauty spots and established in their place modern cities, containing all the incongruities of civilization. Murky channels have replaced sparkling streams; drab wharves and factories, warehouses and railway sidings have superseded grassy slopes and shady trees which once bordered the banks of the rivers. In place of the primitive system of society there has developed, as in the older countries, the complex system of capitalist society, with all its institutions.

How have the workers of Australia fared under these changing conditions? A brief survey will enable oversea workers to understand the conditions of the workers in this "land of opportunities."

WAGES FALLING.

During recent years there has been a definite downward trend in the wages and standard of living of the workers here. In 1928 the Waterside Workers had their wages reduced, and conditions which had been strenuously fought for in the past were wiped out by the stroke of the pen of an Arbitration Court judge. Later the Timber Workers had to resist an attack on their wages and conditions of employment. Re-

ductions running as high as 26s. per week were imposed, and after a bitter struggle, during which many were jailed and more were batoned and bashed by the police for interfering with blacklegs, the Timber Workers were forced to capitulate. The miners of New South Wales were next attacked, and although they stood out solidly for fifteen months, during which time some of their number were shot dead by the armed thugs of the Capitalist class, they had finally to accept a 12½ per cent. reduction in wages. The irony of the defeat was that they had to surrender after they had helped to return the Labour Party to power, which party had made all sorts of promises to the miners during the election campaign. In almost every other branch of industry wages have been reduced and conditions worsened. To-day there are approximately 200,000 unemployed workers in Australia. So much for the conditions of the workers in the country which perpetually boasts of its incomparable standard of living.

THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR PARTY.

Time and again this Party has sat on the Government benches, and at the present time we have a Labour Government in the Federal House, and one in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

Under the Hogan Labour administration in Victoria, members of the Waterside Workers' Federation were shot at and one killed, in 1928. Unemployed workers have been batoned and jailed. The wages of public servants, railwaymen, and others in Government employ have been reduced by order of the Government. Wholesale scabbery has been sanctified, and trade unions have been smashed under the régime of the Labour "stalwarts."

Similar activities have been engaged in by the Labour Government of South Australia. Almost the first thing that the Lang Labour Government in New South Wales did on its taking over last month was to baton the unemployed, to whom Mr. Lang and his henchmen had promised the millennium. Mr. Lang recently purchased(?) a most beautiful yacht, and some unkind critic suggested that he intends to use it as a means of escaping the sordid results of his own administration.

The Federal Labour Government is in a terrible dilemma. Having stated that they could run the system in the interests of all sections of the community, they now find

that Capitalism can be administered in one way only, viz., in the interest of the Capitalist class. Every act they pass, and every move they make accentuates the position. Faced with the greatest depression in years, they have embarked upon an economy campaign which is resulting in thousands of workers being thrown out of their jobs. Their star contortionist, Mr. Theodore, has been tripped by a Royal Commission, which found him guilty of grave offences against the Capitalist class. This gentleman now knows that while the Master class does not mind what a Labour Politician takes from the workers, that class will not stand any interference with their own property. Owing to the finding of the Royal Commission, Mr. Theodore had to stand down from his position as Federal Treasurer, and most of his old friends now look askance at him. While the workers' wages are being reduced, the Labour Prime Minister, "Jim" Scullin, is touring Europe attending to the affairs of the Australian Capitalist class.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

This confusing gathering of self-styled revolutionaries presents the sorriest spectacle in Australian politics. For years it supported the anti-working class activities of the Labour Party, on the grounds that the workers would learn by experience. After denouncing the Labour Party as a reform party, it decided to run its own candidates in the last New South Wales elections. Putting forward about fifty-two candidates, they went to the electors on a Communist Reform Platform. Among their reforms were to be found the following:—

Work or maintenance for the unemployed.

Equal pay to women and youth for equal work.

The unrestricted right to organize and strike.

Abolition of all wage taxes and all income taxes on incomes under £400.

Agricultural labourers and all poor and middle farmers to receive the basic industrial wage.

Special grants of money for strike funds and for the relief of strikers and their dependents.

In office, the Communists will attempt to disarm police and Capitalists, and organize an armed workers' militia.

Wage mass drives in defence of the Soviet Union, Hands off India campaigns, in defence of the Chinese Revolution.

Repudiation of all War Debts, etc.
(C.P. Election Manifesto, N.S.W. elections, November, 1930.)

There you have the "revolutionary" aims of the self-styled "vanguard of the working class." Attached to the Communist Party are dozens of other still-born children of the Russian Revolution. There is the Militant Minority Movement, the Young Communist Movement, the I.C.W.P.A., the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Rank and File Movement, *et alia*. A meeting of the Communist Party is held, and there we find all the leading emancipationists. A visit to the M.M.M., and here we find the same faces with different official names. A walk into the I.C.W.P.A. meeting, and here they are again! A peep into the meeting of the F.O.S.U., and once again we see the old familiar faces. The workers are slogged with slogans, confused with a myriad forms of organization, and misled by a million different ruses.

On the Committee of the I.C.W.P.A. are Labour Party politicians, yet the Labour Party jails the men whom the I.C.W.P.A. is attempting to get out. Unlike the pussy in the well, they are put in and pulled out (sometimes) by the same gang.

All the aforementioned Communist groups are out to usher in, like a thief in the night, the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Anybody who refuses to follow their dictates and declines to have his or her head bashed in by the bobby's truncheon is labelled a "defeatist" by these fanatical followers of the "new line" from Moscow.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA.

Our Party is gradually making itself felt amongst the workers. Small in numbers, and hampered by the confusion created by the Labour Party and the Communist Party, we find it difficult to keep afloat in the political maelstrom. Having Socialism for our objective, we do not expect, nor do we receive, any assistance from the Australian Capitalists or the Russian Capitalists. Nevertheless, we continue with our propaganda, holding our meetings and lectures when circumstances permit. Unemployment amongst our members has prevented us from getting out our Official Party

Organ. Lack of finance is also a factor in the non-appearance of our paper. Without this latter we are seriously handicapped, but we are optimistic. The development of Capitalism in Australia is quickening, and we are convinced that, when we are able to place our position fully before the workers, our efforts will not have been in vain. In spite of all the present drawbacks, we look to the future with hopes of success.

As soon as funds will permit and circumstances warrant it, we will run candidates during future elections and, despite the jibes of our opponents that the majority of the workers will never understand Socialism, we pin our hopes on the working class.

W. J. CLARKE.

(For the Socialist Party of Australia.)

THE SOCIALIST FORUM.

INCENTIVE UNDER SOCIALISM.

A correspondent writes asking what will be the incentive under Socialism.

Human nature being as it is—what incentive for hard work do you propose to put in the place of the desire for freedom from financial worries (both for themselves and those they respect and love), which alone drives men and women of good-will to create (at great cost to themselves) wealth from the resources of nature.

If left to all to set a common standard of life, that standard (besides being an extremely dull one) would be at a lower level than the more advanced would rightly be content to live. Would you drag all humanity down to a low level beyond which so many would not be prepared to work hard enough to go?

Reply.

Human beings, whatever the social system under which they live, must either work to produce the necessities of life, get someone else to work for them, or die of starvation. Our correspondent apparently assumes that under capitalism the wealth and security of the rich results from their own efforts. This is not the case. The rich are rich simply by virtue of owning the means of production which are operated by the working class. We are faced, then, with the remarkable situation that the workers put up with a system in which they are working to enrich a propertied class. When they realise the nature of capitalism and the way in which it can be replaced by Socialism, we believe that they will take that way. We further believe that the members of society will not find it more difficult to co-operate in producing wealth

for themselves than the workers now find it to produce wealth for the capitalist class. In view of the enormous and avoidable waste of capitalism, and in view of the admitted activities of capitalist Governments and industrial associations in restricting production, we are confident that life under Socialism will not be at a low standard. It is for our correspondent to give his reasons for believing that it will.

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A QUESTION ON RENT.

A reader in St. John, N.B., Canada, asks a question about rent.

Does the rent that the worker receives as part of his pay become part of surplus-value after the landlord gets it, or is it only the building labourers, etc., who are exploited by the landlord.

Reply.

The worker is exploited when he works, not when he buys things—whether he buys food, clothing or shelter. The position as regards the rent paid by the workers is the same as in the case of other necessities of life bought with their wages. Rent is the price the workers pay for shelter, and it figures as part of their cost of living. Where rents are low, wages will tend to be low also. The landlord is in the position of other capitalists. Subject to various factors which interfere with the tendency towards a uniform percentage return on all capitals invested, the landlords will tend to receive the same return on capital invested in house-building or house-purchase as they would receive if they invested in any other investment field.

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BANK LOANS AND DEPOSITS.

Two readers (W. Nicholls and E. Wright) draw attention to the address delivered by Mr. McKenna at the shareholders' meeting of the Midland Bank. In the course of the address Mr. McKenna said: "It is evident that more money was created than trade actually needed." These two readers both ask who "created the money" if the banks did not.

What these readers have not allowed for is Mr. McKenna's notoriously loose use of words. If we had only this phrase to go upon, we might believe (as our critics want us to) that Mr. McKenna still holds the view which he is once alleged to have expressed in the phrase, "Every bank loan creates a deposit," *i.e.*, the theory which