The Referendum and the Socialist View

SOCIALIST COMMENT

SOCIALIST PARTIES OF AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND

Vol. 5 No. 9

MAY, 1948

One Penny.

Late this month we shall be asked to say “yes” or “no” to the “Rentals and Prices-including Charges” amendment to section 51 of the Constitution.

This is not because the Government has any respect for the opinion of the and that of the Labour, Liberal, or Country Party, could make any alteration to the constitution, still less the consent of the people by a direct democratic vote.

Since we, the Working Class, are the majority of the people, both sides in this contest are frantic in their efforts to convince us that their interests depend on supporting their case.

The question we must ask ourselves is, “What interests do these Party platforms represent?”

The article on the Labor Party, in this issue, shows clearly that the Party does NOT represent the Working Class. It represents the local manufacturers, that is to say, those depending on local capital, and to some extent, local markets.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, represents international finance, combined with international capital.

The Country Party, though it rides on the votes of the small farmers, actually represents the big producers and interests in the vast overseas markets.

Here we have the key to understanding the reasons for the stand they all make and the question of control. The Labor Party, fearing inflation should Controls be lifted, knows that the local manufacturer would be caught up in the whirlwind. The Country Party had the scope for its resources and activities, they can only survive if the prices they must pay for their raw materials and wage labour, and the prices they can command for their commodities, fluctuate within reasonable limits.

The big combines and pastoral interests are not in that position. They have the world for a stage, and the possibility of inflation in Australia does not hold the same threat.

The Liberal and Country Parties are unanimous in their distrust of Government Controls. The tendency in this direction is evident in all the Capitalist countries, and if a period when the prospects for profit on the world market are very rosy for private Capital, they will oppose anything that snatches of it. At the moment those prospects are very rosy, and they see the proposed amendment supply as a power to control profits.

An yet—it was the Menzies Government that introduced these controls. So they did, and so they will again, if they happen to be in power, and the reasons for their becoming as bleak as it was then.

At that time the line up of waiting nations depleted the world market for hundreds of millions as it was on the other side of the fence, plus the fact that troop movements and war materials took precedence over consumer goods in shipping.

On top of these restrictions in resources and the scope of their activities, we must remember that the gigantic task of feeding, clothing, and earning thousands in the productive services had to be carried on with a depleted working class. It would have been an “open go” for demands for higher wages if wage controls had not been imposed.

A timely article in the January, 1948 issue of the Western Socialist shows how the Canadian Liberal Government, which was in power throughout, took the same somber and practical case.

So much for the Parties in the limelight, but the weight of opposition to the amendment. But since we have a vote on this matter, how will it affect us, the Working Class?

The aforementioned article, “The Price Control Fraud,” which by the way, could almost be read asAustralian Labor, and of Canadian, points out that “Civilization is not new, and never has been, endangered by high prices. Price fluctuations, often in extreme degrees, are as old as the system itself. They are normal to the Capitalist mode of production, and serve as regulatory rather than destructive influences.”

We shall probably hear a great deal from both sides about “our civilization” being endangered either by controls, or by the lack of controls, but we are safe in assuming, that whenever this sort of clap-trap is used, somebody’s profits are in danger,—or they think they are.

An argument is made for controls on the ground that high prices are tantamount to a cut in wages.

Against that, we have the demonstrable tendency of capital to leave the sphere of less profitable lines, and concentrate on the production of goods that are uncontrolled, and therefore more remunerative. This can result in shortage of necessities, and an abundance of luxury lines.

But that is no more pertinent than any other consideration is the fact that the vagueness of the phrase, “Rentals and Prices, including charges” will only be interpreted to include the price of labour-power, that is, wages.

Opposition members have pointed this out more than once, and even in the official “For and Against” leaflet which every voter received, the Labor Party does not deny this. They will use it to eat wages just as readily as the opposition parties, if the need arises.

Actually, wage control has been in force, for all practical purposes, ever since the Arbitration Court has functioned. It has had the support of Government and Opposition Parties, AND the Trade Unions. It is possibly the biggest hoax ever imposed on the Working Class, excluding Capitalism itself.

The choice before us boils down to this—the possibility of inflation without controls or the granting of constitutional powers to peg wages with controls tighter than those the Government has already.

In other words, between scarlet fever and diphtheria!

The Socialist will decide to have none of them, but will leave the master class, sections of which think they have something at stake, to fight it out with the help of those of the working class they can continue to feed.

Those of us who recognize the contest for what it will make the opportunity to write across our ticket once again, the change we DO want, and will go on working for until we get it, SOCIALISM of Melbourne Branch, Socialist Party of Australia.

“We hold that the working class, whose skill and energy is now used for the purpose of providing wealth and luxury for a small section of society and whose physical courage is exploited to defend the material interests of that small section, is quite capable of using its skill, energy, and courage for the solution of its own problems, when it understands the social base from which these problems spring.”

W.J.C.
The Labor Party
A History of Working Class Oppression

The labor movement has been fighting against employer-dominated machinery. The labor movement has always been a vital part of the democratic movement, and has always existed as a struggle of the working class against the prevailing capitalism. Today, the labor movement is as vital as ever, as the struggle against the prevailing capitalism continues.

Aid to Britain? Or Aid to Profit?

The source of wealth in society is the supposed distribution of labor power. In the labor market, economic relations are the product of profit. Therefore, to discuss the nature of wealth, we must first discuss the role of profit in the labor market.

In 1919, the Labor Party made a proposal for a reorganization of the labor market. The proposals were rejected by the government, but the proposal was still debated in the Labor Party. The proposal was to split the labor market into two parts: a part for the labor movement and a part for the working class.

The reason for this split is that the source of wealth in society is the supposed distribution of labor power. Profit is the source of wealth in society, and profit is the result of the labor movement. Therefore, to discuss the nature of wealth, we must first discuss the role of profit in the labor market.

In the labor market, the labor movement is the source of wealth. The labor movement is the source of wealth because it is the labor movement that distributes labor power to the working class.

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going statements of Mr. Stresney, British Food Minister, were published in the "Socialist Comment" on the 29th October, 1946.

Their lack of MUNNY would be the reason for the shortage of food for our starving "Kith and Kin" before the war.

Whether the means of production, i.e., lands, mines, factories, machines, transportation, etc., are owned by the State or private persons, when put into motion the commodities and conditions of production may be sold at a profit or production cesses, or is severely curtailed. This is the circumstance which brings about the conditions wherein we find workers with energies for sale but no buyers—in a word unemployed.

In turn, the unemployed are used as a weapon to menace the employed, forcing them to accept lower wages and poor conditions of work. These are reasons why such large numbers of the working class suffer miserable living standards before the war. While Capitalism maintains the economic forces workers to "return again with emphasis to the lower priced article," or in plain and simple terms, cheap unwholesome foods, shoddy clothes, and miserable housing conditions.

Just as long as the mental and physical energies of the workers retain their commodity nature, to be sold like bread and meat, just as long will the conditions and effects of Capitalism remain, i.e., wars, poverty, and wage slavery.

There is only one way to end the system which demands so much sacrifice from the workers, the cradle to the grave, on the part of the wealth producers (workers), and that is the establishment of common ownership in the means of production. To accomplish this, slogans are of little use. To fail in this urgent task there is needed a majority of workers with SOCIALIST UNDERSTANDING.

The Socialist Party of New Zealand and its companion Parties are organized for the achievement of this objective. Socialist education is our method.

How about joining us now fellow workers?