

What is the
LIBERAL
PARTY..

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BY E.F.HILL

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WHAT IS THE LIBERAL PARTY?

On Tuesday, March 27, 1945, the Right Hon. R. G. Menzies, K.C., M.P., addressed a meeting of 3,400 citizens in the Melbourne Town Hall. The meeting officially launched the Liberal Party in Melbourne. Mr. Menzies reported that 204 Liberal Party sub-branches had been formed in Victoria and New South Wales and there were now 40,000 members. It was hoped to reach a membership of 200,000.

Such a movement warrants a careful analysis.

All Press reports, public meetings and official statements show that the Right Hon. R. G. Menzies is the very heart and soul of the Liberal Party. His history, and that of the Liberal Party, are inextricably woven. When the former U.A.P. opposition in the Federal Parliament became the Liberal opposition, Mr. Menzies made the appropriate announcement. The Melbourne Town Hall meeting, referred to above, was Mr. Menzies' meeting. In making his speech on the Banking Bill Mr. Menzies laid down the policy of the Liberal Party not only now but for the future. (March 22, 1945). He has given up his legal practice to get the Liberal Party under way ("Argus," March 31, 1945).

Mr. MENZIES IN THE U.A.P.

Let us go back to the days of the United Australia Party. Remember that when the U.A.P. opposition became the Liberal opposition there was not one change in the personnel of the opposition.

Mr. Menzies was no less a prominent member of the U.A.P. than he is of the Liberal Party. In his U.A.P. days, in October, 1938 (a few weeks after Munich), he spoke at the Constitutional Club in Sydney and said: "Democracies cannot maintain their place in the world unless they are provided with leadership as inspiring as that of the dictator countries."

"Why was Hitler able to tear up the treaty of Versailles, absorb Austria and the Sudetenland without firing a shot? The dominating reason why he was able to do it all is that he gives the German people a leadership to which they render unquestioning obedience. If you and I were

Germans sitting beside our own fires in Berlin, we would not be critical of the leadership that has produced such results." ("Sydney Morning Herald," October 28, 1938).

Some few months later (March, 1939) arose the vital question of the export of iron to Japan. The short facts, in the words of Sir Isaac Isaacs, former Governor General of Australia and Chief Justice of the High Court, were: "Waterside Workers at Port Kembla, not bound by law or contract to load pig iron, refused to contract to put on board the "Dalfram" 7,000 tons of pig iron. It was part of 23,000 tons of Australian pig iron purchased by a Japanese firm during the present war between Japan and China. The iron was consigned to the Japanese firm but the Government as well as the Waterside Workers fully realised, and indeed as the Government's reasons for refusing prohibition admit, the iron was destined **not for trade purposes, but for the Japanese Government for war purposes.** The men refused to engage to put the iron on board solely because they would, as they conscientiously believed, thereby become accessories, in helping Japan in a war of aggression, and in bombing inoffensive Chinese civilians. The Government intervened to force them to load the pig iron." (Australian Democracy and our Constitutional System: Sir Isaac Isaacs, pp. 14-15). The Minister who carried into effect the export of pig iron to fascist Japan was the Right Hon. R. G. Menzies.

NEW NAMES — NEW PERSONNEL

Between 1931 and October, 1941, there were about 40 personnel changes in the U.A.P. Cabinet, most of them due to internal disputes. Mr. R. G. Menzies resigned on March 15, 1938, over the National Insurance Bill. On the death of Mr. J. A. Lyons, Mr. Menzies became Prime Minister. Thereupon Messrs. Page, Cameron, Thorby, McEwen and Thompson resigned from the Cabinet because they refused to work with Mr. Menzies. On April 29, 1941, Mr. Menzies, unable to maintain peace and stability in the U.A.P., resigned as Prime Minister. Mr. Menzies' resignation had been preceded by moves from a rebel section of the U.A.P. to dismiss him from U.A.P. leadership.

In April, 1943, Mr. Menzies formed the National Service Group—a group of the most conservative members of **the U.A.P.** This group had the close backing of the B.H.P. Mr. W. M. Hughes became the leader of the U.A.P.: Mr. R. G. Menzies became the leader of the National Service Group.

STATEMENTS OF Mr. W. M. HUGHES

It is perhaps well to recall some of the incidents in connection with all these somewhat confusing moves. Mr. W. M. Hughes spoke of the National Service Group as "saboteurs" and "a group of wreckers" and went on to say: "What miserable humbug all this is. Mr. Menzies deplures self-seeking, whispering campaigns and intrigues; he passionately urges the need for unity **but is himself the great self-seeker, the man behind the scenes in every intrigue,** the fountain head of every whispering campaign, **the destroyer of unity.**" On April 6, 1943, Mr. Hughes again declared: "My opponents had been intriguing for months . . . instead of showing that they placed the interests of the Party and the country above their petty intrigues, they set to work to split the Party. Nothing short of the leadership of the combined Parties will satisfy Mr. Menzies . . ."

Mr. Menzies' colleague, Mr. Hughes, spoke again of the National Service Group: "That a group headed by Mr. Menzies—whose record in the last war is, to say the least of it, **not very distinguished,** should advance preference to soldiers as a reason for deposing me is an insult to the intelligence of the electors." Again: "The only great principle upon which Mr. Menzies can be relied to stand firm is his leadership of the Party." (Sydney Morning Herald, April 4, 1943.)

In 1939, Sir Earle Page said: "The National Leader must have courage, judgment and loyalty. Mr. Menzies does not possess these qualities." (W.A., July 11, 1939.)

NEWSPAPER COMMENTS

The following is a selection of comments of leading Australian newspapers on the position of Mr. Menzies' U.A.P. Government, in 1940: "Don't let us deceive ourselves. There has been bungling, inefficiency, temporising and confusion. It is now on the Government's own head to get us out of the mess." (Daily Telegraph, May 23, 1940.)

"It (the Government) has become stale; it contains too many dissentient factions: and its personnel is sadly lacking in administrative ability." (Sydney Morning Herald, July 26, 1940.)

"The mass of the electors would put more confidence in Mr. Menzies if they were convinced—and they by no means are convinced—that he means to place national needs before Party exigencies." (Sydney Morning Herald, August 21, 1940.)

In the Federal election campaign of 1943, the United Australia Party, led by Mr. R. G. Menzies, and the United

Country Party, led by Mr. A. W. Fadden, agreed to pursue a common electoral policy. In accordance with the agreement, Mr. Menzies made the policy speech of the united opposition. Immediately afterwards, Mr. Fadden protested about Mr. Menzies' speech. We quote the "Age," July 26, 1943: "In a bitterly outspoken comment Mr. Fadden said in Brisbane that the attack by Mr. Menzies was not only a stab in the back, but also another betrayal in the series for which Mr. Menzies had become notorious."

Mr. MENZIES' OWN WORDS

You will recall the loading of the "Dalfram" referred to above. Let us pursue this a little further. Mr. Menzies was a strong supporter of Mr. Chamberlain: he gave full and unconditional support to the policy of appeasement of Nazi Germany ("the democracies cannot maintain their place in the world unless they are provided with leadership as inspiring as that of the dictator countries." (Sydney Morning Herald, October 28, 1938.). This policy led Mr. Menzies to urge the British Government to close the Burma Road—the road along which military supplies, etc., were taken to China. The Burma Road was closed.

On August 31, 1939, Mr. Menzies said: "For the first time in history Australia has so thoroughly prepared for eventualities that it has complete plans, fully documented for taking all those steps . . . which would need to be taken after an actual declaration of war.

"The Army is prepared. The R.A.A.F. is in a very good state of preparation."

Such was, however, the state of preparation that Australia's defence had to be conceived of in terms of a defence around what has been called the Brisbane line.

On June 22, 1941, Soviet Russia was attacked by Nazi Germany. Mr. Menzies, and those who are now Liberals, were associated with statements that the Red Army would not last eight weeks.

On February 13, 1944, Japanese controlled Batavia radio spoke of Mr. Menzies, along with the American isolationist Colonel McCormick and others, as "clear-eyed souls" who understood the problems of Germany and Japan.

On February 22, 1945, Mr. Menzies made a speech on the decisions of Mr. Churchill, Mr. Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin taken at the Crimean Conference. Among other things he spoke of Poland and said the decisions "might be a deplorable example of war bargaining and pressure." (Sun, February 23, 1945.). In a characteristic speech Mr. W. M. Hughes made an outspoken condemnation of Mr. Menzies' attitude.

Mr. MENZIES AS A WAR-TIME LEADER

Full and unstinted praise by competent military men has been given to Australian troops, assigned the difficult and dangerous task of fighting strongly entrenched Japanese troops in the Pacific. Mr. Menzies deprecates these activities as "mopping up."

Here then you have an indication of the career of Mr. Menzies who is, as we said, the heart and soul of the Liberal Party. What does it amount to? It amounts to this—that Mr. Menzies has always been suspect by his closest political colleagues, he is a political schemer, he was an open admirer of Hitler, he was a champion of appeasement, he forced the loading of pig iron and scrap iron to fascist Japan, he recommended the closing of the Burma Road, leaving China deprived of vital war material in its struggle against Japan, he left Australia unprepared against aggression, he said the Red Army would collapse in eight weeks, he speaks of the operations of Australian troops as "mopping up," he attacks the decisions of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, taken at the Crimean Conference, he is spoken of by Japanese fascists as "a clear-eyed soul" who understands the problems of Germany and Japan.

And all this appears not in the words of opponents of Mr. Menzies, not in the words of any Communist but in the words of Mr. Menzies himself, in the words of his political colleagues, and in the words of newspapers that support him and the Party to which he belongs.

All this needs to be fully remembered when the Liberal Party is being discussed. For what purposes is the Liberal Party going to be used? What policy is it going to pursue? Having given you the views of others on the U.A.P., and Mr. Menzies, let us give you a short summary of our views.

The Liberal Party is the direct successor of the United Australia Party. The United Australia Party was the direct successor of the Nationalist Party. These are changes of name but there has never been any radical change in the leading personnel of these Parties when the names have been changed. Mr. Menzies himself has been a Nationalist, a member of the U.A.P. and is now a Liberal. Neither have changes in name meant a basic change in policy. This Party is not Liberal—it is just the same as the U.A.P. and its policy is the same. U.A.P. support of appeasement leads logically to "Liberal" opposition to the world security planned by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin.

Admiration of Hitler leads logically to a soft peace (advocated by clear-eyed souls) which would enable German and Japanese fascism to get under way again. Appeasement and admiration of Hitler leads to the lofty contempt expressed by Mr. Menzies for "mopping up" by the Australian troops.

THE SAME OLD STORY ABOUT NATIONALISATION

Let us test this statement a little further in the light of the present controversy on nationalisation. Mr. S. M. Bruce, then Nationalist Prime Minister, played a leading part in disposing of some of Australia's nationalised industries.

Although freight charges on the Commonwealth Line of Steamers were £6 per ton whilst on private lines they were up to £15 per ton, nonetheless the Commonwealth Line showed a handsome profit. Mr. S. M. Bruce, in the interests of the private shipping companies, sold this great asset at a ridiculously cheap price. He was opposed to nationalisation! So, too, is Mr. Menzies.

The Curtin Government's proposed nationalisation of the airlines is obviously designed to develop Australia just as Government-owned railways have done. Mr. Menzies is not nearly as interested in Australia's development as he is in safeguarding the profits of the great shipping combine in whose interests his predecessor, Mr. S. M. Bruce, sold the Commonwealth Line of Steamers. Those shipping interests at present have a controlling interest in the airlines.

Although through the Government-owned Commonwealth Clothing Factory and Woollen Mills, a £9/9/0 suit could be produced for 30/-, and still a considerable profit made, Mr. S. M. Bruce sold these enterprises for £155,000. Their value was over £400,000. The opposition of Mr. Menzies to nationalisation has exactly the same meaning and intention.

The Curtin Government's Banking Bill is not nationalisation, but is an extension of the cheap and efficient service that has always been given by the Commonwealth Bank. To that, Mr. Menzies is opposed. In other words he carries forward the policy of the Nationalists and the U.A.P. into the Liberal Party and stands opposed to these measures although they are in the people's interests.

IS Mr. MENZIES A LIBERAL.

Mr. Menzies as a Liberal might be expected to have that broad tolerance towards radical groups that is popularly associated with the word "liberal." But not Mr. Menzies, for at the Melbourne Town Hall meeting, he said: " there is nothing I have enjoyed better in the last two or three years than telling a bunch of 'Commos' exactly where they get off." (Argus, March 28, 1945). Fine words for a Liberal! Fine words for a responsible politician when it is remembered that Marshal Stalin is a Communist!

Whilst he was in the U.A.P., the "Liberal" Mr. Menzies was notoriously the very reverse of Liberal. It was he who made a laughing stock of himself and Australia, when he attempted to prevent the well known Czecho writer, Kisch, from landing in Australia to urge collective security. A little later, the "Liberal" Mr. Menzies was a member of the Government that facilitated the travels in Australia, of the Nazi spy, Von Luckner. Still later, the "Liberal" Mr. Menzies banned a number of trade union journals and then banned the Communist Party.

Mr. MENZIES' FRIENDS

Who are Mr. Menzies' close associates in this new venture? They are all former members of the National Service Group which many people thought was another version of Hitler's National Socialist Party. In the new Liberal Party all the militantly reactionary members of the National Service Group are playing a prominent part. In the Senate, Mr. Menzies' counterpart is Senator McLeay. Here it might be well to remind you of a little incident about Senator McLeay and two other "Liberals." We quote the "Daily Telegraph," April 16, 1943: "Strong protests have been made to the State War Loan Committee against the attitude of three U.A.P. members of Parliament towards the Third Liberty Loan."

"The protests were lodged by the Mayor of Kapunda (Mr. H. Rees) and Warrant Officer Frank Legg, of the Ninth Division, against the opposition Leader in the Senate (Senator McLeay, S.A.), Senator James McLachlan (S.A.) and Mr. Duncan Hughes, M.H.R. (S.A.).

" 'Instead of supporting the Loan, these men sabotaged it on party policy lines,' Mr. Rees said. 'We never got a penny from the meeting.'" Mr. Legg said, 'I was astounded at the address by Mr. Duncan Hughes and, after the three members had spoken, I had to untangle everything they had said. Their attitude made me furious.'"

WHO CONTROLS THE LIBERAL PARTY?

The control of the Liberal Party is, of course, in the hands of outside persons. Mr. Menzies has always been associated with big business. It was in the interests of the B.H.P. that he forced the loading of the Dalfram: the U.A.P. was the Party of big business. The new Liberal Party cover is designed to serve the same interests. It has been said that £700,000 was subscribed to get the Liberal Party under way. Whether or not this be true, it is obvious that the Liberal Party has enormous financial resources. It had these financial resources before there was **any Liberal Party organisation at all**. With a membership of 40,000, the figure claimed by Mr. Menzies (March 27, 1945), paying 2/6 subscription fee, the Liberal Party's legitimate funds should total a mere £5,000.

The control of the Liberal Party is just the same as the control of the U.A.P. Let one of the Liberals, Mr. Ian Macfarlan, K.C., "Liberal" Attorney General in the Victorian Government, tell us about it. In 1937, Mr. Macfarlan left the U.A.P. because he said **the U.A.P. was controlled by an outside body**, the members of which are unknown to the majority of Party members. "It has been claimed," he said, "that members of the U.A.P. as distinct from those of other Parties, have perfect freedom of political expression, and action. My nine years' experience in the Party has convinced me that **this statement is a sham**." (Age, November 11, 1937). Mr. Macfarlan also spoke of the Central body bosses of the U.A.P. and the conservative interests behind it, and stated, in effect, that these people controlled the endorsement of U.A.P. members. We may also mention in passing that the U.A.P. members in the Victorian Parliament, without one change of personnel, became overnight the Liberal members.

SOME AIMS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

The Liberal Party appeals to people to join it "because its principles are classless. Anyone who stands for the defence of Democracy against the onrush of Totalitarianism, with its bureaucracy and its regimentation, must support the political aims of the Liberal Party, because of their insistence on personal freedom, tolerance, for the rights of the ordinary citizen, and a fervent belief in human dignity and progress" (Liberal Party circular). Quite a good statement you might say; but was it "classless" to force men, on pain of starvation, to send iron to Japan, to provide profits for the B.H.P. employing class?

Let us by all means prevent the coming of bureaucracy and regimentation but let us realise it will be introduced by these men themselves—self-confessed admirers of Hitler! Let us have personal freedom, tolerance and so on but not the brand favoured by those who ban Trade Union papers and the Communist Party, and whose fervent belief in human dignity and progress takes the form of speaking of Australian soldiers as "mopping up," of public servants as using the "Government stroke" and of an important and influential section of the Australian public as a "bunch of Commos."

THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT "INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE!"

Mr. Menzies and the Liberal Party claim to have a policy in the interests of the middle-class, the small shopkeepers and landowners. But Mr. Menzies' policy and actions have always been directed against these very people. The Liberal Party looks "primarily to the encouragement of individual initiative and enterprise as the dynamic force of reconstruction and progress." (Constitution of the Liberal Party p. 2). Another set of fine words! But what do they amount to? Individual initiative and enterprise for Mr. Menzies means, above all, freedom of the big monopolies to make as much profit as possible—to exploit the people to the greatest possible extent. It means the ruination of the small business men who have no chance in competition with the great monopolies. It means low wages, just as the U.A.P. has always depressed living standards, and in turn that adversely affects the middle-class.

The history of the Nationalist, Mr. S. M. Bruce, the U.A.P., Mr. J. A. Lyons and then Mr. Menzies has always been a history of big business against the smaller men. Do you think Mr. Menzies has undergone a change of heart?

They protest that nationalisation of the airlines is strangling individual enterprise and initiative, but have you any shares in the airline companies? How many individuals are concerned with "individual initiative and enterprise" in the airlines? A mere handful! In fact, the persons to whom that individual enterprise and initiative is to be guaranteed, if Mr. Menzies' opposition to nationalisation is successful are: W. Holyman and Sons, Orient Line, Huddart Parker Ltd., Union Steamship Co. and Adelaide Steamship Co. Ltd. Is YOUR individual initiative and enterprise going to be adversely affected by the much more efficient, cheap and extensive airlines service that will be available when the airlines are nationalised.

And what of the banks? Do you own any shares in the Bank of New South Wales or the E. S. & A. Ltd. or any other? Is your individual initiative and enterprise going to be curbed because the powers of the Commonwealth Bank are extended? On the contrary, your individual initiative and enterprise would be assisted by an extension of the cheaper and more efficient service of the Commonwealth Bank. Your savings have never been unsafe in that Bank. You have always been able to get interest on current accounts in the Commonwealth Savings Bank. None of the private banks offer that.

THE "GOVERNMENT STROKE"

The measure of the sincerity of Mr. Menzies and his supporters, in their protestations about the middle-class, is to be found in their arrogant and insulting reference to the "government stroke." Thousands and thousands of public servants, who constitute a good proportion of the middle-class, give loyal and efficient service in their employment. To suggest that they trade on their security of position in the public service, that they do not do all that they could, that they loaf in their jobs, is a gross insult to the vast majority of them. But it is in keeping with the whole history and attitude of Mr. Menzies and his close associates.

THE REALITY OF THE LIBERAL PARTY

Do not make any mistake about it! The Liberal Party leaders and the Liberal, Mr. Menzies are the most reactionary and unscrupulous band of men it would be possible to find. It was not for nothing that Mr. Menzies earned the unenviable nickname of "Pig Iron Bob," (with just the same grim significance as Mr. Chamberlain's umbrella). These men are trying to mislead the people by calling themselves "Liberal" and putting up an elaborate window dressing of liberation. But behind them stand the most sordid and reactionary vested interests. Who do you think supported appeasement and uttered soft words about Hitler?

All over the world it was that narrow group of industrial magnates who placed selfish class interests above national interests—men who brought the world to the brink of disaster—the Chamberlains, the Moore Brabazons, the McCormicks and the Menzies. Do you think they have changed their policy now? No! In all the changing circumstances throughout recent history they have put those selfish interests above national interests. They opposed collective security (now achieved only after years of terrible

war), they sent war materials to Japan, they closed the Burma Road, they resisted the opening of the second front, they opposed friendship with Soviet Russia (the Red Army will last eight weeks), they oppose Mr. Churchill, they advocate a soft peace and so the story goes.

Their policy is one that is opposed to the interests of the people, including the vast majority of the 40,000 men and women who have so far joined the Liberal Party in the mistaken belief that it is Liberal. Their policy is calculated to undermine the peace that is being won at immeasurable sacrifice and can only be secured with world co-operation. Their policy is designed not in the interests of the people but in the interests of that very narrow but powerful section of Australian monopolists who have always backed the U.A.P. and Nationalist Parties and whose last concern has always been the welfare of the Australian people.

