HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT

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A MARXIST INTERPRETATION

By
E. W. CAMPBELL
Director, Marx School.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS essay represents a modest venture into a field which has, in the writer's opinion, been too long neglected. Little enough of a purely factual character has been written about the history of the Australian Labor Movement, while for the most part the interpretation of events has been left mainly to bourgeois liberal historians, reactionaries and reformists. Thanks are due to Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, in his Short History of the Australian Labor Movement, for making a break with the old tradition. But, as Mr. Fitzpatrick says about his work, "This essay has few pretensions. It is a digest of one man's reading and observation of the Labor Movement in Australia, and is presented for the single purpose of describing what Labor has done and has tried to do towards building a 'fair and reasonable' society in Australia under capitalism."

The object of this present book is altogether different. It is an attempt to interpret the history of the Australian Labor Movement from the viewpoint of Marxism. Little or no original research has gone into it. The pressing tasks of the practical struggle for socialism do not permit much time off for such luxuries. The writer has been compelled to accept and rely on the discoveries of others and is greatly indebted to Mr. Fitzpatrick for the valuable leads obtained, not only from that author's own works, but also from the useful bibliographies attached. All that is new is the construction placed upon developments, which, as previously stated, purports to be Marxist.

No claim is made that what appears is necessarily the last word to be written on the subject. Like Mr. Fitzpatrick's Short History it is "a digest of one man's reading and observation." As such it is bound to have some shortcomings. An attempt has been made to limit these by having the manuscript read, in its various stages of preparation, by such qualified Marxists as J. B. Miles, L. Sharkey and R. Dixon. Their advice and assistance have been of the utmost value, but final responsibility for what appears herein is accepted by the author.

The central theme is that "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement," and that while the labor movement continues to be non-revolutionary it must remain subservient to the bourgeoisie. Only the combination of socialism with the mass labor movement creates a durable basis for both. The writer regards the most significant event in the history of the Australian Labor Movement to be the formation of the Communist Party in 1920. Only then did

there really begin the task of uniting socialism with the mass movement, without which the emancipation of the working class is impossible.

Whatever modifications in minor detail may have to be made in subsequent editions, as new facts emerge, this fundamental conclusion at least will never be shaken.

E. W. CAMPBELL.

October 30, 1945.

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A. THE FIRST TRADE UNIONS.

The genesis of the Australian Labor Movement is trade unionism, which arose here in the 1850's. Prior to this there were no associations which could rightly be called trade unions. There were, however, some cases of workmen temporarily combining to obtain specific demands. For instance, the printers employed in W. C. Wentworth's "Australian" newspaper establishment struck work in 1829, and there was an association of unemployed men in Sydney in 1843. But the convict system, which prevailed during the first half century of white settlement, prevented any real development of free working class organisations. Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, in his Short History of the Australian Labor Movement,[1] draws attention to two main factors which delayed the appearance of any widespread industrial organisation. One was political, the lack of free institutions generally; the other was economic, the practice of assigning convicts to servitude with the few thousand merchants, manufacturers and pastoralists who constituted the employing class.

While these conditions existed no emergence of any strong and permanent working class organisations could be expected.

In 1840 the assignment system and convict transportation to New South Wales were discontinued. Economic and class relationships became more clearly capitalist in character and trade unionism began to take shape. In 1845 a Friendly Society of Carpenters and Joiners was formed in Sydney. In 1850 an Operative Stonemasons' Society

1. A Short History of the Australian Labour Movement by Brian Fitzpatrick, page 17, Melbourne, Rawson's Bookshop, 1940.

was founded in Melbourne. In 1851 compositors in Sydney set up a Typographical Association. In 1852 a number of prominent members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who had been driven to leave Britain on account of victimisation, resolved, on board the ship bringing them here, to establish a branch of their union in the new country. Thus, by the early 1850's trade unionism was sending down durable roots in Australian soil. But in 1851 gold was discovered at Bathurst, New South Wales, and at Ballarat and Bendigo, Victoria. The ensuing rush to the 'diggings' left many employers without workmen and must have had some detrimental effect on the young trade unions. However, the check was short lived and ultimately trade unionism, like most other things in the colonies, received a new impetus from the gold rush period.

B. THE EFFECTS OF THE GOLD RUSH.

The gold discoveries enriched Australia in more ways than one. Not only was impetus given to capitalist development in general, but the forces of the proletariat, the 'gravediggers' of capitalism were immeasurably strengthened. The young colonial working class, which had not yet passed the formative stage of development and was still preoccupied with mastering the elementary forms of combination, benefited considerably from the addition to its ranks of more experienced organisers and fighters from other lands.

Amongst the hundreds of thousands of immigrants attracted to the 'diggings' were many French socialists, German republicans, Irish rebels and English Chartists. It is not suggested that the entire gold fields population was composed of such radical elements, but there were enough of them to exert a profound influence on events and to help rekindle in Australia in '54 the revolutionary flames which had been quelled in Europe in '48.

The squatters constituted the dominant class in the colony at the time of the gold rush. For almost forty years they had carried on a fight against the autocratic governors and for representative government. In 1850 their efforts were crowned by success when the British Parliament passed the Australian Colonies Government Act. In the process of this struggle the squatters had developed a strong class consciousness and "in the maintenance of their interests they had evolved a political party, based on a property franchise, and led by an aristocratic politician of the Whig type—Wentworth."[1] The

1. Australia: An Economic Interpretation by G. V. Portus, page 30, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1933.

squatters wanted to turn Australia into one vast sheep station over which they might rule as a new colonial aristocracy. They were most antagonistic to the changes wrought by the gold rush, sensing in the new mineral wealth a challenge to the supremacy of wool and a vital challenge to their old privileged position. The gold rush drained the sheep runs of labor and forced the squatters to pay higher wages. This they resented, as well as the new spirit of independence which began to spread among the laboring classes.

It was the representatives of the squatters in the Legislative Councils who, together with the Colonial Governors, were responsible for the iniquitous licence system which provoked the Eureka rebellion in 1854.

The 'diggers' on their part returned the hostility of the squatters. The mode of living on the goldfields fostered amongst the toilers a radical democratic outlook which conflicted with the ruling philosophy of the wool barons. The 'diggers' vaguely aspired to a state of society in which there would be no masters and servants, a society in which equal opportunity for all would prevail and each man would be "his own boss." This digger philosophy, if such it can be called, not only reflected the past social background of most of the immigrants but also to a large extent idealised the conditions actually existing on the goldfields at that time. The digger was not yet a wage-laborer, the day of company mining had not yet dawned. Little or no capital was required to set up as a digger. Anybody who could lay hands on a pick, a shovel and a tin dish and who could afford the monthly licence fee, was free to engage in the search for gold. In the towns and on the sheep stations the worker might be dependant on the merchant, contractor or squatter for a living, but on the 'diggings' Jack was as good as his master and the worker was 'his own boss.' It is true that rich 'finds' only came the way of a fortunate few among the many thousands who flocked to the 'fields' but the others were always buoyed up with hope.

C. THE EUREKA REBELLION.

The Miner's Licence, without which no digging could take place, became a source of serious trouble on the goldfields. Costing originally 30/- a month it was a tax on labor which struck at the diggers' freedom to follow their chosen occupation. The resentment of the diggers was enhanced by the high-handed methods of the Goldfields Commissioners who administered the system and the harassing tactics of the police. Many of the latter were recruited from the lowest dregs of the population and among them "digger hunting" developed

into a popular sport, under the patronage of British governors, corrupt magistrates and the squatters seated in the Colonial Legislatures. One of those who often played the part of quarry graphically describes these 'hunts':

> "I, Carboni Raffaello da Roma, and late of No. 4, Castle-court, Cornhill, City of London, had my rattling 'Jenny Lind' (the cradle) at a water hole down the Eureka Gully. Must stop my work to show my licence. 'All right.' I had then to go a quarter of a mile up the hill to my hole, and fetch the washing stuff. There again—'Got your licence?' 'All serene, governor.' On crossing the holes, up to the knees in mullock, and loaded like a dromedary, 'Got your licence?' was again the cheer up from a third trooper or trap. Now, what answer would you have given, sir?" [1]

Had the unhappy Raffaello not been in a position to produce his licence each time on demand he stood the chance of being roped to the pommel of the troopers saddle and dragged off to the lock-up, or, since this establishment was mostly filled to overflowing, being chained to a log in the open.

The diggers carried on incessant agitation against these abuses and for the abolition of the licence system. By September, 1853, it was no longer possible for the authorities to turn a deaf ear to this agitation and the Legislative Council set up a Committee of Enquiry. The outcome was an Act reducing the licence fee from 30/- a month to 20/- for one month, £2 for three months, £4 for six months, or £8 for one year. This concession did not satisfy the diggers, who persisted with their drive to have the fee abolished.

On November 11, 1854, a mass meeting of miners at Bakery Hill resolved to form a Ballarat Reform League. There is evidence of a strong Chartist influence in the League. Its original list of demands included five of the six points of the famous British People's Charter—Universal male suffrage; equal electoral districts; payment of members; annual parliaments; and no property qualifications for members. The sixth point, secret ballot was also later taken up by the democratic movement in Victoria, which State pioneered its introduction in 1856. In addition to these political demands the Ballarat Reform League listed in its programme the economic demands of the diggers, including that which called for the abolition of miners' and storekeepers' licences on the fields.

1. The Eureka Stockade by Carboni Raffaello.

The trouble which had long been gathering on the goldfields was brought to a head early in December. A digger was found murdered outside a low-class shanty known as the Eureka Hotel. His mates strongly suspected that the publican, an ex-convict called Bentley, was to blame. Feeling ran high when the Coroner exonerated Bentley and mass pressure brought about a second inquest. Despite the very suspicious evidence Bentley was again set free. When on top of all else it was discovered that one of the magistrates was a shareholder in Bentley's hotel the wrath of the diggers overleapt all bounds. Mass meetings and demonstrations led to clashes with the police and cavalry. The immediate issue became coupled with the outstanding grievances, and the movement boiled over into open-armed rebellion. The diggers, en masse, burned their licences and set up camp behind a log palisade at Eureka. Here they hoisted, as the symbol of their revolt, the Southern Cross and swore beneath its folds the solemn Eureka Oath. Again let us turn to one of the chief actors for a first hand account of the drama:

> "There is no flag in old Europe half so beautiful as the 'Southern Cross' of the Ballarat miners, first hoisted on the old spot, Bakery Hill. . The flag is silk, blue ground, with a large silver cross, similar to the one in our southern firmament; no device or arms, but all exceedingly chaste and natural. The maiden appearance of our standard, in the midst of armed men, sturdy, self overworking gold diggers of all languages and colors, was a fascinating object to behold. . . . Some five hundred armed diggers advanced in real sober earnestness, the captains of each division making the military salute to Lalor, who now knelt down, the head uncovered, and with the right hand pointing to the standard, exclaimed in firm measured tone:
>
> "'We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties.'
>
> "A universal, well-rounded Amen was the determined reply; some five hundred right hands stretched towards our flag . . . the vividness of double the number of eyes electrified by the magnetism of the Southern Cross, was one of those grand sights, such as are recorded only in the history of the Crusaders in Palestine."[1]

The government was greatly alarmed at the turn of events and rushed a force of soldiers and police from Melbourne to put down

1. Ibid.

the rebellion. At dawn on December 3, the stockade was stormed. Five soldiers and between twenty to thirty miners were killed in the brief but violent encounter which followed. Although the revolt was quickly crushed it cannot be said to have been in vain. By the middle of 1855 both the licence system and the office of Goldfields Commissioner were abolished. While Eureka was not actually responsible for the democratic constitution which came into force in Victoria in 1856 (this had been framed prior to the rebellion) it undoubtedly contributed to the subsequent liberalising of the political institutions.

In 1856 Victoria pioneered the way in introducing the secret ballot. In 1857 manhood suffrage was adopted. In England bills to institute voting by ballot were rejected twenty-eight times by the House of Lords and the principle was not finally adopted until 1872. This seems to add point to the epigram with which one prominent goldfields agitator never failed to conclude his speech:

> "Moral persuasion is all humbug,
> There's nothing convinces like a lick i' the lug. . . ."

The land monopolists and colonial bureaucrats received a "Lick i' the lug" at Eureka which convinced them that concessions to popular feeling would have to be made.

Perhaps the chief significance of Eureka for the labor movement is that the colonial workers, by birth and adoption, who did not yet constitute a class nevertheless came out independently in an endeavour to influence the course of history in their own favour. It is true that the revolutionary consciousness which animated the diggers was not purely socialist, but more republican and democratic. It was not their aim to establish a socialist republic, but a democratic republic wherein the will of the people would be sovereign and every man 'his own boss.' This represented an advanced political aim for that time. It brought the workers into sharp conflict not only with the bureaucracy representing the power of British capital, but also the colonial ruling class, which had its own ideas about how the country should be governed. Although the workers failed in their immediate object, the effort left its mark on history. The tradition of militant struggle created at Eureka has played a valuable role in helping to mould the Australian workers into 'a class for themselves.' This was shown in the great class battles of the 'nineties, when the Southern Cross was again unfurled by striking shearers encamped at Barcaldine in Queensland. The challenging verses of Drake:

"Remember how the Miners at Eureka's Stockade fell!
If need shall rise, ere Union dies, we'll fight like them as well!" [1]

and Lawson:

"So we must fly a rebel flag,
As others did before us;
And we must sing a rebel song,
And join in rebel chorus.
We'll make the tyrants feel the sting
Of those that they would throttle.
They needn't say the fault is ours
If blood should stain the wattle!" [2]

provided the workers with great inspiration by associating the ideas of Eureka with Unionism.

Karl Marx contributed an article on Eureka to one of the American liberal papers of the period. In it he pointed out that the underlying causes of the revolt in Victoria were similar to those which gave rise to the American War for Independence in 1776. (The chief demand of the diggers was identical with that of the earlier American colonists—'No taxation without Representation.') But whereas in America it was the middle classes who headed the revolt, "in Australia the opposition against the monopolists united with the colonial bureaucrats arises from the workers." [3].

However, it proved that the workers were not yet strong enough to retain leadership of the movement and carry it through to a successful conclusion. The defeat inflicted on them at Eureka left the initiative in the hands of the ruling classes and Australia continued its political development along lines adapted to their interests.

D. THE STRUGGLE FOR THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

Unionism soon recovered from whatever setbacks resulted from the rush of workers to the 'diggings' in 1851. The ultimate effect of the gold discoveries on unionism was stimulating. The arrival in the colony of many British artisans who were already well versed in labor organisation gave the movement a fillip. The revival of unionism took place first of all in the building trades. This was to be expected when we consider that in 1857 there were more than 45,000 canvas dwellings in the colony of Victoria.

Agitation in this early period centred mainly around the length of the working day. The wages question was not a vital issue. The

1. Remember the Union by C. Drake, written in 1890.
2. Henry Lawson, verse printed in Brisbane Worker, May 16, 1891.
3. News From Australia, Karl Marx, 1855. Reprinted in Australia Marches On, by L. L. Sharkey, Sydney, 1942.

demand for labor was far in excess of supply and this found its reflection in the price of labor power—wages. In the decade before the gold rush artisans' wages ranged between 4/- and 5/- per day. By 1855 they had risen to between 25/- and 30/- per day. Of course the price of necessities also rose during the same period, but not to the same extent as wages. Therefore it is little wonder that the question of hours took precedence over the question of wages in the demands of the workers.

The craft unions in the building trades pioneered the struggle for a shorter working day. The Sydney Stonemasons were the first to chisel this concession out of the employers by strike action on February 18, 1856. But it was in Melbourne, where the craft unions in the building trades had come together in a loose form of federation, that the 8-hour day first became a firmly established custom. Chartist leaders James Stephens, who had fought in the Newport rebellion of 1839, and T. W. Vine, played a prominent role in the 8-Hour Day movement. By 1858 eight hours had become generally recognised as the standard working day in the building industry in New South Wales and Victoria. This was a full ten years before the slogan was raised by the American workers and incorporated by Marx in the First International's programme of immediate demands.

E. THE ORGANISATION OF BUSH WORKERS.

By 1858 the easily worked surface deposits of alluvial gold were nearing exhaustion and the technological changes which were taking place were converting gold mining more and more into an industry requiring the investment of capital.[1] Thousands of diggers in consequence were returned to the labor market and wages took a downward trend. But here again unionism was indicated to counteract this tendency. The workers were impelled towards combination to conserve the high standards established in the earlier and much more favourable period. In this they were partially successful. Wages did not remain at the peak period level, but neither did they revert to the pre-gold rush standard. In 1870 artisans were paid at rates varying between 8/6 and 10/- per day. This was 4/6 to 5/- per day higher than the rates paid for the same classes of employment in 1850. Since there was very little difference in the relative price levels for the two periods the workers were actually twice as well off after the gold rush as they were before. The high standards established in the

1. The British Empire in Australia, by Brian Fitzpatrick, p. 161, Melbourne University Press, 1941.

'seventies; were maintained and even improved (since the cost of living became cheaper) up to the 'nineties. One liberal historian, Coughlan, describes the twenty years between 1870 and 1890 as "the brightest period in Australia's history for wage earners." Judged purely from the economic viewpoint no doubt there is much truth in Coughlan's observation. A close investigation would probably disclose the reason to be that, apart from seasonal fluctuations, the supply of labor continuously fell short of the ever increasing demands of a rapidly expanding economy. Australia was too remote from Europe to experience that wave of immigration which created special problems for the American labor movement.

The "brightest period for wage earners" was also a period of trade union expansion. Up to the 60's the chief unions were based on the cities and only embraced skilled tradesmen. They were craft unions fashioned on the lines of British unions covering the same calling and, like the British unions, were non-socialist in character.

But one of the biggest problems confronting the industrial movement in Australia was the organisation of bush workers, those nomads who followed no settled trade, but worked now in the mines, now in the shearing sheds or now on some construction job or other. The organised labor movement could make little or no headway while this great body of semi-skilled and unskilled workers remained untouched.

The first successful mass organisation to arise among outback toilers was the Amalgamated Miners' Association. The nucleus of the A.M.A. was the Bendigo Miners' Association which emerged from the strike which won the 8-hour day for Bendigo miners in February, 1872. This victory encouraged organisation on other fields and soon quite a number of local unions were functioning. In June, 1874, twelve of these unions met at Bendigo and formed the A.M.A. By 1886 the Association had 51 branches and over 13,000 members. The A.M.A. was the first big industrial union to be formed in Australia, or more correctly Australasia, since it extended to N.Z., and for a time it embraced coal and metalliferous as well as gold miners. In the course of its short history it conducted 29 strikes and resisted 8 lockouts. No less than 13 of the strikes were in defence of "the principles of unionism," that is the right to organise. In only one instance did the A.M.A. suffer defeat and that was in the six months' strike at Kaitangata, New Zealand.

The next section of the bush workers to become organised were the shearers. They were directly influenced by the A.M.A.'s record of successes. Many of those belonging to the A.M.A. often found employment in the sheds during the shearing season. When, in 1886,

the squatters attempted to reduce the shearing rate by 2/6 a hundred sheep, some of these miner-shearers approached their Secretary, W. G. Spence, with a request that he assist them to organise the pastoral workers. Spence responded to their appeal and organisers were dispatched to the country. Soon organisations were established at Ballarat, Bourke and Wagga. In 1887 these unions, along with similar local bodies, merged to form the Amalgamated Shearers' Union.

In the same year a Queensland Shearers' Union was also formed. Some years later shed hands and station hands were taken into the organisation and in 1907 the A.S.U. absorbed the Q.S.U. and the name was changed to Australian Workers' Union. With the miners and shearers organised it was not long before unionism extended to other sections of the outback toilers.

F. THE ISOLATION OF THE MOVEMENT FROM SOCIALISM.

As unionism expanded trades and labor councils were set up in the different colonies to co-ordinate activities. The desirability of still wider co-operation was soon recognised and, in 1879, the first Intercolonial Trade Union Congress was held in Sydney. Only two of the 36 delegates, however, came from outside New South Wales.

The second Congress in Melbourne in 1884 was more widely representative and it seems that here a decision was taken to make the Congresses an annual event, alternating the venue between the various capital cities. Further Congresses took place in 1885, Sydney; 1886, Adelaide; 1888, Brisbane; and 1889, Hobart. The debates at these meetings usually centred around ways and means of rectifying particular economic grievances by common action in all colonies. The watchword of unionism at this time was "Defence and not Defiance."

This slogan was borne aloft in the Eight-Hour Day processions which had become a regular yearly feature. It represented the most crushing reply that the unions of those days could devise in countering the employers' hysterical charges that they were out to 'foment a bloody revolution.' It clearly expressed the spontaneous character of the labor movement and its isolation from socialism.

So long as this state of isolation persisted the labor movement was bound to remain more or less impotent. Lenin informs us that, "Isolated from socialism, the labor movement becomes petty and inevitably becomes bourgeois: in conducting only the economic struggle, the working class loses its political independence; it becomes the tail of other parties and runs counter to the great slogan: 'The emancipa-

tion of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves,'"[1] and in another article, ". . . the spontaneous labor movement is pure and simple trade unionism . . . and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie."[2] The Australian labor movement in the period under consideration was experiencing something common to all countries. "In every country there has been a period in which the labor movement existed separately from the socialist movement, each going its own road; and in every country this state of isolation weakened both socialist movement and the labor movement."[3] The truth of this is well illustrated by the history of the Australian labor movement. The mass movement, while tremendously strong numerically and powerful organisationally, has never in the past been able to achieve much that is of permanent benefit, chiefly because it lacked a clear sense of direction. Blundering ahead without vision it has stumbled first into this path, then into that, it has made mistake after mistake, and all too often dissipated its strength in hopeless struggles which could have been avoided had it possessed socialist theory to guide its footsteps. The various socialist sects of the past have likewise been impotent, mainly because they lacked the ability to unite with the mass movement. Only through the unity of theory with practice, the unity of socialism with the mass movement can real progress be made towards the goal of the working class.

1. Urgent Tasks of our Movement, by V. I. Lenin. Selected Works. Vol. 2, p. 11.
2. What is to be Done? by V. I. Lenin, p. 41, Martin Lawrence, London.
3. Urgent Tasks of Our Movement, p. 11.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT STRIKE AND THE BIRTH OF THE LABOR PARTY

A. THE SOCIALISM OF WILL LANE.
B. THE GREAT STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS.
C. THE BIRTH OF THE LABOR PARTY.
D. THE SEGREGATION OF THE SOCIALISTS.

1. THE SOCIALISM OF WILL LANE.

The process of combining socialism with the mass labor movement is, in the words of Lenin, "an extremely difficult one." "In each country this combination takes place historically, is brought about in a special way, in accordance with the conditions prevailing at the time in each country." [1]

To William Lane belongs the credit for launching the first serious attempt in Australia to effect this combination. Lane came from a petty bourgeois family which emerged from a peasant environment in Ireland. His father was an active Tory and in his young days Lane was strongly influenced by his views. Some years spent in America, however, helped to change his ideas and when he arrived in Australia in the middle 'eighties he was a confirmed socialist. [2].

By this time Marxism had achieved a complete theoretical victory over other —utopian—streams of socialism in the European labor movement. "The revolution of 1848 struck a fatal blow at all these vociferous, motley and ostentatious forms of pre-Marxian socialism . . . The shooting down of the workers by the republican bourgeoisie in the June days of 1848 in Paris finally established that the proletariat *alone* was Socialist by nature. . . . All doctrines of non-class Socialism and non-class politics proved to be sheer nonsense." [3] Marxism established itself as the only scientific theory of socialism. However, not all who claimed to be followers of Marx had really succeeded in

1. Ibid., p. 11.
2. Dawn to Dusk by Ernie Lane, pp. 6/7.
3. The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx by V. I Lenin, Marx-Engels-Marxism, p. 74/75, Second English Edition. Modern Publishers, Sydney.

mastering his teachings and making a decisive break with their liberal past. This was the case with Hyndman in Britain, De Leon in America and Lane in this country.

Lane's socialism was much more utopian than scientific. In 1887 he founded not a Marxist circle but a Bellamy[1] society in Brisbane. His teachings had more in common with the doctrines of St. Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen,[2] than with Marxism.

The objective conditions prevailing in Australia at the time Lane commenced his activities tended to reinforce rather than to help overcome his utopian views. "Marxism," writes Lenin, "is more easily, more quickly, more fully and firmly mastered by the working class and its ideologists in conditions of the greatest development of big industry. Economic relations which are backward or fall behind in their development constantly lead to the appearance of adherents of the labor movement who master only certain aspects of Marxism, only separate sections of the new world outlook, only separate slogans and demands, being incapable of breaking decisively with all the traditions of the bourgeois world outlook in general and the bourgeois democratic world outlook in particular."[3]

Big industry was non-existent in Australia at the end of the last century. Economic relations were still backward. Australia was in the main a nation of primary producers who exported their surplus of raw materials and foodstuffs in return for the finished products of older manufacturing countries.

V. G. Childe, in How Labor Governs, relates that "Prior to 1901 Australia was dependant upon imports for the majority of the articles necessary to the life of her inhabitants and to the development of her natural resources. Iron, for instance, could not be produced, and steel has only been turned out since the opening of the Newcastle works in 1915.

"It is only since the beginning of the century," Childe continues "that manufacture proper has been undertaken on a large scale. Prio

1. Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), American journalist, author of utopian socialist novels, Looking Backward and Equality.
2. Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Robert Owen (1771-1857), French and English Utopian Socialists, authors of ideal socialist and communist systems. For an estimation of their role see The Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels, chapter 3, section 3, Socialist and Communist Literature—Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism.
3. Differences in the European Labor Movement by V. I. Lenin, p. 81, Marx-Engels-Marxism. Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1941.

to then secondary industry could be grouped under two main heads, *(1) the refining of raw products, without, however, converting them* into consumables — smelting, wool scouring, tanning and milling— operations which are on the border line between primary production and manufacture proper; (2) small industry—baking, brick making, furniture making, brewing and so on. In the main secondary production was on a small scale and progress was slow."[1].

Not a very favourable soil, it will be seen, for the rapid cultivation of Marxist, scientific, socialism.

William Lane did not confine his socialist activities to writing tracts and making propaganda speeches. He threw himself into the practical work of the mass movement and soon revealed great organising talent. His supreme achievement in this sphere was the building of the Australian Labor Federation in Queensland.

The Australian Labor Federation took shape from the discussions at the Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses. From 1884 various schemes for closer unity between the unions in the different colonies had been brought forward and debated at these congresses. But it wasn't until 1889 that a concrete plan for a nation wide federation was adopted. This plan was again endorsed at the Ballarat Congress in 1891. The scheme was obviously inspired by Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union which had sprung up in Britain in the 1830's. It provided for the division of Australasia into seven provinces corresponding to the seven colonies (New Zealand being included). The provinces were to be further subdivided into districts. District Councils were to be elected to administer affairs within their territory, over these District Councils would be the Provincial Councils and over all there would be a General Council representing the entire movement. It represented a most ambitious and elaborate scheme to unite the whole working class of Australia and New Zealand in a single organisation under centralised leadership and control. But outside of Queensland it remained no more than an ambitious scheme.

The Northern Province of the A.L.F. was established in 1890 and thanks to the diligent and enthusiastic efforts of William Lane it became more than a mere paper plan of organisation. In twelve months he united more than 15,000 workers in the Federation and started, under A.L.F. control, the first labor paper in Australia with a mass circulation—the "Worker." The A.L.F. in Queensland revived old unions and organised a number of new unions. It gave

1. How Labor Governs by V. G. Childe, p. xxi/xxii/xxiv. Labor Publishing Co.: London, 1923.

valuable assistance and leadership to more than one strike struggle. The Federation was allowed to lapse in 1913 when the labor movement had become permeated with opportunism.

In all his practical work Lane was constantly inspired by his high socialist ideals and did his utmost to imbue the mass movement with a socialist objective, to provide it with aims which transcended the narrow horizon of petty trade unionism. Lane's theoretical shortcomings plus the unfavourable objective conditions prevented him from achieving this goal. He came close to realising it in 1888, when the Brisbane Intercolonial Congress adopted a socialist objective, and again in 1890, when the Northern Provincial Council of the A.L.F. did likewise. But these gains for socialism were only temporary. The foothold which it obtained in the mass movement was lost after the 1890 strikes, when the trade unions turned their attention to Parliament. Lane then abandoned hope of socialism making headway in Australia and led a band of his disciples off to Paraguay in South America to found a utopian socialist community. Lane's "New Australia" fared no better than the earlier experiments of Cabet, Owen and Charles Fourier. Many of those who left with him on the Royal Tar in July, 1893, full of enthusiasm for socialism returned within a year or so disillusioned, soured and embittered by their experience. Consequently more harm than good was rendered the cause of socialism in Australia.

B. THE GREAT STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS.

The decade from 1880 to 1890 was, in general, a period of boom. The skilled and organised section of the workers enjoyed a real wage that was greater even than that of the 'seventies. But storm clouds were gathering on the horizon. The price of wool, which was still the foundation of Australia's prosperity, was steadily declining. From 1875 to 1894 it fell by 49% according to some authorities. A period of low world prices set in and loan money became scarce. To a large extent it was loan money which had sustained the boom in Australia. From 1886 to 1890 £53,000,000 of overseas capital flowed into this country.[1] When the springs which fed this steady stream of loan capital began to dry up public works began to slow down. In 1888 there were 15,000 unemployed in N.S.W. All the signs of impending crisis were in plain evidence.

The employers, who had found it expedient to make concessions to the workers in the period of prosperity and high dividends, were

1. Australia: An Economic Interpretation by G. V. Portus, p. 55, Angus & Robertson. Sydney, 1933.

now determined to reverse the process. The workers on their part were not disposed to yield up their gains without a struggle. Both sides organised their forces in preparation for what was to be the first great class conflict between Capital and Labor in this country.

Evidence of the growing class consciousness of the workers in the period immediately preceding 1890 was revealed during a strike on the Melbourne waterfront in January, 1886. The wharflabourers had struck for an eight-hour day and wage increases. The shipowners tried to break the strike by importing volunteer labourers. This caused the seamen to notify the owners that members of their union would not man the ships bringing free labor to Melbourne. "We are compelled to take this course," they stated, "owing to the struggle having assumed a new phase, viz., Capital v. Labor."[1] This phraseology was a typical expression of an attitude which was fast becoming general in the ranks of the working class. It gave the employers further cause for wanting to call a halt to the progress of labor.

Hitherto the employers' organisations had lacked cohesion, a fact which the unions often made use of to further their own interests. But the crisis enabled the capitalists to surmount their competitive differences and to unite more solidly against the common enemy—Labor. By the middle of 1890 a particularly influential section of the employing class, the shipowners, announced that they were now organised and ready to dispose of the question of 'job-control' and didn't much care what served as an excuse for precipitating the crisis. In July Willis, chairman of the Steamship Owners' Association, declared, "All the owners throughout Australia have signed a bond to stand by one another, and do nothing unless a vote of all the members be taken. They are a combined and compact body, and I believe that never before has such an opportunity to test the relative strength of labor and capital arisen."[2]

A cause for provoking the inevitable conflict was found by the Shipowners in the decision of the Marine Officers' Association to affiliate with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The Owners demanded of the Officers that they cancel this affiliation on the grounds that it was derogatory to discipline on the ships.

While this conflict was proceeding the squatters, organised in the Pastoralists' Union, were preparing for a similar trial of strength

1. A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement by Brian Fitzpatrick, p. 58.
2. Ibid, p. 66.

with the shearers. In the 1889 season 90% of the sheds "shore union," which meant that wages and conditions were determined by a collective agreement between the squatters and the Amalgamated Shearers' Union. The squatters were bent upon reducing wages but the Union Agreements stood in the way. They therefore determined to ignore the Union and revert to "station agreements," which meant that each employer would bargain with his workers individually, forcing them to accept the rates and conditions previously decided on by the Pastoralists' Union. The Amalgamated Shearers' Union countered these plans of the squatters by issuing a Manifesto calling on its members to refuse to work in sheds not adhering to the Union Agreement. The support of the Sydney Trades and Labor Council and the Maritime Unions was enlisted to block the carriage of non-union wool.

Thus by the middle of 1890 in two of the key industries, maritime and pastoral, matters were heading towards a climax. This came on August 16 when the marine officers walked off their ships and were followed by the crews. Waterside workers and coal lumpers soon came out in solidarity. On September 11, the A.S.U. called its members out. The Northern N.S.W. colliery proprietors locked out their miners, as did the B.H.P. at the Barrier. The Great Strike was on.

The strike was led by a Labor Defence Council, organised by W. G. Spence in Sydney. At the height of the struggle more than 50,000 workers were involved, mostly in New South Wales and Victoria. The strike aroused widespread sympathy and support among workers in other colonies and abroad. Trade unionists in all colonies subscribed £28,000, private donors £4,500, and British unions £4,000. But solidarity and enthusiasm alone do not win struggles of such magnitude. Sound revolutionary theory as well as good organisation and leadership are the basic elements required to bring success to the workers in the class struggle. None of these, at this stage, were possessed by the Australian labor movement. The employers, on the other hand, were well organised and better prepared for the struggle than the workers and had at their disposal the State apparatus. This they made full use of in railroading the strikers to gaol, organising reserves of volunteer labor and setting it to work under police and military protection. By these means the strike was eventually broken and the workers compelled to return to work towards the end of October defeated. The Newcastle miners were the last to go back on November 5, 1890. Thus ended the first phase of the first great general class battle in the history of Australian labor.

A second phase was entered upon in January, 1891, when the Queensland shearers came out on strike against the station form of agreement. They also were defeated. In this phase the connection existing between the employers and the State was more clearly revealed than in the first stage. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, for example, saw no irony in addressing himself to the strikers as "a member of the Government and the Australian Pastoralists' Association."

A high ranking officer who took part in crushing the strike has left us his views as to why this task was accomplished with relative ease. His comments on unionism contain some valuable lessons even today.

"We have found the boasted organisation and discipline of the unionists all a myth," he said. ". . . . Discipline and organisation are not to be acquired by merely talking about them. They are the outcome of long and careful training. They presuppose complete authority and definite responsibility, carefully apportioned and regulated from the lowest to the highest officer, and also the most careful and even laborious attention to detail. How were the unionists to acquire this system, and if it has been acquired, where is the evidence of it?

"When I give an order, it is done in writing and carefully recorded, so that any neglect or omission may be at once detected and punished; but who has such authority among the unionists, and how are offenders to be brought to book? They have the raw material of good organisation, but they have no competent leaders, and no system. . . . The unionists may, for all I know, be able to defeat the pastoralists, but they cannot defeat or seriously trouble the Government." [1]

In July, 1892, the Barrier miners came into the firing line and the conflict passed into its third phase. In the 1890 strike the A.M.A. members at Broken Hill were locked out by the company. But the lockout only lasted a fortnight. Silver and lead had not yet fallen in price like wool and the B.H.P. was still reaping enormous profits. The men took advantage of this when locked out by refusing to return to work until the Company signed an agreement granting wage increases and a reduction of hours from 48 to 46 per week. However, in 1892 silver and lead prices experienced a decline and the Company gave notice that the Agreement would be terminated. The 7000 unionists on the 'Hill' struck for the retention of the agreement and remained out for four months. Again police and soldiers were used

1. Ibid, p. 79.

to break the strike and give protection to volunteer labourers.

A rearguard action, marking the fourth and final phase of the conflict, was fought by the Queensland shearers from July to September, 1894. More violence was used by both sides in this struggle than in any one of the preceding stages. It also witnessed the birth of coercive legislation as an additional weapon against the unions. The Peace Preservation Act brought down by squatter Nelson's government in September, 1894, was the most vicious piece of anti-working class legislation yet placed on the Statute Book in any one of the colonies. Charles Powers, M.L.A., who was not a Labor man, said in regard to it, "I can find no Coercion Act amongst all the Coercion Acts of Ireland so coercive as this Bill." The Queensland Coercion Act of 1894 was the forerunner of similar Acts in Victoria, 1903; New South Wales, 1909; the War Precautions Act, 1914/20; the Commonwealth Crimes Act, 1926/32; and the Arbitration and Transport Workers' Acts of 1928.

C. THE BIRTH OF THE LABOR PARTY.

The struggles of 1890/94 revealed with merciless clarity the ideological and organisational shortcomings of the Australian Labor movement and fully confirmed Marx's teachings that whilst the "Trades unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital, they fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class."[1]

The strikes showed furthermore that numbers alone constitute but one element of success, that, "numbers weigh only in the balance, if united by combination and led by knowledge."[2] They showed that trade unionism alone wasn't sufficient and that the workers needed in addition an independent political party, based on sound socialist theory, to lead them in their struggles against the employing class.

However, as Lenin once observed, "The masses learn from life, and not from books, and consequently, individuals and groups constantly exaggerate and raise to a one-sided theory and one-sided system of tactics now one, now another feature of capitalist development,

1. Value, Price and Profit, by Karl Marx. Selected Works, Vol. 1, p. 337, Martin Lawrence, London.

2. Address and Provisional Rules of Working Men's International Association. Karl Marx. Selected Works, Vol. 11, p. 441.

now one, now another 'lesson' of this development."[1] This is just what happened in Australia. The masses and their then leaders learned only in part the lessons of the 1890's defeats. It caused them to turn towards politics, but not yet socialist politics which were the real need.

The following extract shows how the Strike Committee interpreted the significance of the first phase of the struggle in 1890. "We would call attention to the actions of the governments of each colony in regard to the strike, and would recommend active, energetic work, throughout all labor organisations in preparation for *taking full advantage of the privileges of the franchise,* by sweeping monopolists and class representatives from the parliaments of the country, replacing them by men who will study the interests of the people and who will remove the unjust laws now used against the workers and wealth producers, *and administer equitable enactments impartially*"[2] (emphasis mine. E.W.C.)

The workers and their leaders had observed empirically how the governments, composed of employers' representatives, had made free use of the courts, police and soldiers to break the strike. But they could not yet see that this 'partiality' of the government towards the employers arose from the real nature of the State in capitalist society. That it constitutes "an organ of class rule, an organ for the opression of one class by another,"[3] an apparatus of compulsion designed to uphold the domination of the exploiters over the exploited.

The labor leaders found no fault with the capitalist State as such, their criticism was levelled only against 'unjust' laws and 'biased' politicians. Repeal the 'bad' laws and replace the class prejudiced members and all would be well.

Such was the naive reasoning of the Australian workers at this period. They lacked the revoluntionary political experience of their European compeers, which would have helped disillusion them on this score, and their socialist ideologists were too few in number and too much lacking in scientific theory to open their eyes.

Democratic self-government had been achieved in Australia without much political turmoil. It had already been conceded prior to Eureka. Subsequent liberalising enactments, such as manhood

1. Differences in the European Labor Movement by V. I. Lenin, Marx-Engels-Marxism, p. 81. Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1941.
2. Manifesto of the Strike Committee: Australia's Awakening, by W. G. Spence, p. 131.
3. State and Revolution, Lenin, p. 8. Lawrence & Wishart, London. Popular edition, republished under the title, How to Change the Social Order.

suffrage, secret ballot, payment of members, etc., came more as a matter of course, rather than the result of sustained, widespread and severe mass struggles. While these political reforms were taking place the labor movement was preoccupied almost exclusively with narrow economic questions. In the circumstances one can readily understand how it was that after the 90's defeat the idea of "taking full advantage of the privileges of the franchise" took root. Under the prevailing conditions of democracy, where every man had a vote and the employees outnumbered the employers ten to one, there seemed no reason why the former could not organise a political party and wrest control of the machinery of government out of the hands of the masters.

World history had already shown that this was not possible. On the basis of the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871 Marx reached the conclusion that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purpose."[1] However, as previously mentioned, the masses learn from life and not from books, and life had not yet provided the Australian workers with sufficient experience to fully appreciate Marx's teachings on the State, even had they been more widely known. Moreover the 'purposes'

1. The Civil War in France, Karl Marx. Selected Works, Vol. 11, p. 494.

Marx had in view went far beyond what was envisaged by Australian labor at this time. Marx was referring to the historical mission of the proletariat—the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. The mass movement in Australia did not yet aspire to such high aims but wanted to lay hold of the State machinery merely to advance the narrower objects of trade unionism—'A fair day's pay for a fair day's work.'

The unions had commenced to interest themselves in politics long before the 'nineties. Lobbying and petitioning were well established practices by then. It was also the custom of certain liberal bourgeois candidates to woo the votes of unionists by promising to support in Parliament legislation of benefit to unionism. In one or two instances working men had been elected and subsidised by their organisations. The Sydney Trades and Labor Council had long maintained a regular Parliamentary Committee and the Constitution of the Australian Labor Federation made provision for Parliamentary action. So the ground was well prepared for labor's entry into politics when that step was decided on after the '90's strike.

In New South Wales it was the Parliamentary Committee of the Labor Council which undertook responsibility for carrying out the recommendations contained in the Manifesto of the Strike Committee.

It formulated a scheme for the establishment of a Labor Electoral League with branches in every electorate. A platform was drawn up consisting of sixteen planks. Some of these reflected the influence which the ideas of Henry George, Edward Bellamy and the British Fabians had in some quarters. But most of them were formulated out of the collective experience of the workers and gave expression to the urgent demands of the trade union movement—The Eight-Hour Day, the Repeal or Reform of the Mines Act, Employers' Liability Act, Masters' and Servants' Act, and so on. It was these economic demands, rather than the vaguely expressed political slogans, that were stressed during labor's election campaigns.

The Labor Council sent organisers into the countryside and throughout city electorates to enrol members and establish branches. Membership of the new party was not restricted to trade unionists or workers. Anybody who professed sympathy with the aims of the League and who was prepared to pay the fee of 5/- per year was admitted to membership. The branches were at first given the right to select their own candidates, with the proviso that these pledged their support for the League's Programme. For the time being the Labor Council Executive was to function as the executive of the Labor Electoral League.

In Queensland it was the influential A.L.F. which took the initiative in setting up the Party. Lane was successful in the earlier stages in having the organisation adopt a socialist objective. But when the Party was finally constituted on a sound organisational footing this was dropped and the "People's Parliamentary Platform," in its ultimate shape, consisted of seven more or less innocuous planks calling for equal electoral districts, adult suffrage and the usual list of trade union demands.

The formation of the Labor Party aroused new hopes among back country workers particularly. One very moving example of loyalty to what were then considered to be working class ideals is related by Dr. Evatt:[1]

". . . in the Paroo country, an old swaggie came to the Brindingabba Hut, weak and ill. He was alone and had no money to buy food. Endeavouring to reserve his fast failing strength, he was intent on one thing, to vote for the Labor candidate. 'I want to give Hughie a vote,' he said, 'I suppose it will be my last.' But half his

1. Australian Labor Leader, page 47. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1940.

journey to the electorate was still to be traversed and his condition was desperate. 'I have knocked around these creeks this many a year,' he said, 'and I could never get a vote. But I did get in on a vote this time, and when I got it I said, This belongs to Hughie Langwell.' That night the man died. His name was Martin Farrell. The only papers found on him were his Union ticket and a receipt for a subscription to the Broken Hill strike fund."

Henry Lawson was greatly stirred:

Just before the last elections, and the chaps were fighting well.
Round about the Paroo river, on the borderland of hell.
But the story of the struggle doesn't matter anyhow,
For a parliament of angels couldn't save the country now.

But a poor old fellow struggled to a hut one broiling day,
And his ragged swag fell off him in a hopeless kind of way,
He was sick and very shaky, and his eyes were blurred and dim,
It was plain to all the fellows that 'twas nearly up with him.

—*Worker*: Sydney, 18/8/1894.

Maybe it was a similar incident which moved Tom Collins, although his sundowner was in more affluent circumstances and bore a different name:

"The man had changed his position, and was now laying full length on his back, with arms extended along his sides. His face was fully exposed—the face of a worker, in the prime of manhood, with a heavy moustache and three or four weeks' growth of beard. . . . The dull eyes, half open to a light no longer intolerable, showed by their sheer death darkened tracery of inflamed veins how much the lone wanderer had suffered. The hands with their strong bronze now paled to tarnished ochre, were heavily calloused by manual labor, and sharply attenuated by recent hardship. The skin was cold, but the rigidity of death was yet scarcely apparent. Evidently he had not died of thirst alone, but of mere physical exhaustion, sealed by the final collapse of hope. And it seemed so strange . . . to see through occasional spaces in the scrub the clear expanse of the home paddock, with even a glimpse of the house, all homely and peaceful in the silent sunshine. But such is life, and such is death. . . .

"In the man's pockets were found half a dozen letters addressed to George Murdoch, Mooltanya Station, from Malmsbury, Victoria: and all were signed by his loving wife, Eliza. H. Murdoch. Two of

the letters acknowledged receipt of cheques; and there was another cheque (for £12/15/-, if I remember rightly) in his pocket book, with about £3 in cash. He was buried in the station cemetery, between Val English, late station storekeeper, who had poisoned himself, and Jack Drummond, shearer, who had died — presumably of heart failure—after breaking the record for the district. Such is life."[1]

And such was life in those hard and not so far off days. Many a wandering Martin Farrell and George Murdoch perished on the track between jobs. Farrell was more fortunate than most. He at least made the Hut and died among union comrades. Even Murdoch was discovered in time to leave no mystery surrounding his identity. Many another nomad of the bush passed out nameless, leaving only a heap of windswept bones beside some dried up waterhole to mark the lonely tragedy.

Martin Farrell's last words illustrate the spirit in which this downtrodden strata welcomed the birth of the Labor Party. How they looked to it to speed the day when:

"The curse o' class distinctions from our shoulders shall be hurled."

If this were a novel we could perhaps record how these hopes were vindicated, that Hughie Langwell, for instance, entered the Legislature and became an uncorruptible Tribune for the Martin Farrell's of Australia. Such, however, is not life. Hughie Langwell was elected to Parliament, but his record does not appear to be any more inspiring than that of any other labor politician. He was returned in 1891 on a platform framed locally by the Bourke League, and for a time was refused admittance to Caucus on that account. However, after the first split on the fiscal issue he was taken into the fold and sponsored, on behalf of the Labor Party, the Workman's Combination Laws Act Amendment Bill, which was thrown out by the Legislative Council. The new electoral laws put through in this session reduced the number of representatives from 141 to 125 and Langwell was not among the 15 'Solidarities' and 12 Independent Laborites returned in 1894. Such is life.

D. THE SEGREGATION OF THE SOCIALISTS.

Despite its tremendous programmatical shortcomings, the formation of a separate workers' party in Australia represented a big step

1. Such is Life by Tom Collins (Joseph Furphy), pp. 99/101. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944.

forward on the part of the movement. The same fundamental features which characterised the Anglo-American labor movement existed in Australia. These were: "the absence of any large, *democratic* problems on a national scale, facing the proletariat; the complete subjection of the proletariat to bourgeois politics; sectarian isolation of handfuls of socialists from the proletariat. . . ."[1] Therefore, the following remarks, made by Engels, on the American labor movement, in 1886, hold good for this country. In 1886 the ideas of Henry George, who advocated a single tax on land as the universal panacea, were exerting a big influence over American workers.[2]. This caused one American socialist, Mrs. Kelley Wischnewetsky, who had translated Engels book, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England in* 1844, into English, to write to him requesting that "he take Henry George properly to task." To which Engels replied, "My preface * will of course turn entirely on the immense stride made by the American working man in the last ten months, and naturally also touch Henry George and his land scheme. But it cannot pretend to deal exhaustively with it. Nor do I think the time has come for that. *It is far more important that the movement should spread, proceed harmoniously, take root and embrace as much as possible the whole American proletariat, than that it should start and proceed from the beginning on theoretically perfectly correct lines.* (My emphasis. E.W.C.) There is no better road to theoretical clearness of comprehension than to learn by one's own mistakes. And for a whole large class, there is no other road. . . . The great thing is to get the working class to move *as a class* (Engel's emphasis); that once obtained, they will soon find the right direction, and all who resist . . . will be left out in the cold with small sects of their own. . . . But anything that might delay or prevent that national consolidation of the workingmen's party—no matter what

1. Marx-Engels-Marxism by V. I. Lenin, p. 101. Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1941.

2. A huge strike movement, based on the struggle for the eight-hour day, swept over the United States in the first half of 1886 and a number of new Labor Parties sprang into being under various titles. In the November municipal elections many of these polled big votes. The most spectacular success was in New York City, where the United Labor Party, which had been formed in July, put forward Henry George as candidate for Mayor. George polled 68,000 votes and came second to the Democratic candidate, Hewitt, who polled 90,000. The Republican candidate, Theodore Roosevelt, was third with 60,000 votes.

* Preface to the American edition of Conditions of the Working Class.

platform—I should consider a great mistake. . . ."[1]

In another letter Engels wrote, "The first great step of importance for every country newly entering the movement is always the organisation of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers' party. . . . The masses must have time and opportunity to develop and they can only have the opportunity when they have their own movement—no matter in what form so long as it is only *their own movement*—in which they are driven further by their own mistakes and learn wisdom by hurting themselves."[2]

Of course Engels did not mean that the workers would automatically learn from their mistakes. It was the task of the socialists to enter into the mass movement, assist in the formation of a political party, help the masses "to learn from their mistakes" and work gradually to imbue the movement with a socialist understanding and outlook. "Our theory is not a dogma but the exposition of a process of evolution, and that process involves successive phases. To expect that the Americans (or Australians. E.W.C.) will start with the full consciousness of the theory worked out in older industrial countries is to expect the impossible. What the Germans (Communist immigrants to America. E.W.C.) ought to do is to act up to their own theory—if they understand it, as we did in 1845 and 1848—to go in for any general working class movement, accept its actual starting points as such and work it gradually up to the theoretical level by pointing out how every mistake made, every reverse suffered, was a necessary consequence of mistaken theoretical views in the original programme; they ought, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, to represent the movement of the future in the movement of the present."[3]

Australian socialists, it proved, were no more capable of "representing the movement of the future in the movement of the present" than the German communists living in America, who were criticised by Engels. William Lane, after his earlier abortive attempts to give the movement a socialist objective, became preoccupied with his utopian scheme to found a socialist community in South America. The Socialist League, which had been formed by a handful of enthusiasts in 1887 and which actually became affiliated with the Labor Party in 1894, thought that a labor party had only to be formed to develop automatically into a socialist labor party. The League, instead of

1. Marx, Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 453. Martin Lawrence, London, 1934.
2. Ibid, p. 450.
3. Selected Correspondence, p. 453.

rising above the spontaneity of the movement and aspiring to a vanguard role, itself succumbed to spontaneity and tailed behind events.

It has taken the Australian workers many years "to learn wisdom by hurting themselves" and to "find the right direction." The historical process of combining socialism with the mass labor movement has not been easy and it is only since the rise of the Communist Party in 1920 that any real headway has been made. In the preceding period the non-socialist labor movement was under the complete sway of bourgeois ideology and fluctuated between the two extremes of reformism and syndicalism, both of which "must be considered as the direct product of this bourgeois world outlook and influence."[1]

1. Marx-Engels-Marxism, p. 82.

CHAPTER III

THE BOURGEOIS LIBERAL CHARACTER OF THE LABOR PARTY

A. HOW SPONTANEITY PRODUCES ONLY TRADE UNION POLITICS.

The formation of Labor parties in New South Wales and Queensland, following the defeat of the maritime strike in 1890, represented a further development of, and not a departure from, spontaneity. It has often been stated that these events marked the movement's "turn towards politics." This is quite true, in the sense that independent political parties were formed. But what is not always fully appreciated is that it merely signified a turn towards trade union politics. Trade union politics constitutes "the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for the alleviation of the distress characteristic of their position, but which do not abolish that position, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labor to capital."[1]

Prior to 1890 the Australian workers had tried, with varying degrees of success, to improve their conditions of employment by carrying on guerilla warfare against their employers. They supplemented these efforts on the industrial field by lobbying and petitioning members of the bourgeois parliaments. These approaches to parliament, like the industrial struggles, were in the main sectional. The 1890 strike, however, united the workers in a general struggle against the employers. The subsequent formation of labor parties meant that

1. What is to be Done?, Lenin. Selected Works, Vol. 2, p. 65. Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1934.

this general struggle was to be extended to the parliamentary field. The old watchword of the unions, "Defence and not Defiance," was carried over into the labor parties and paraphrased into "Reform and not Revolution."

The Socialist League was quite wrong in thinking that a labor party had only to be formed to develop automatically into a socialist party. If left to its own devices, that is, if nothing were done by the socialists to divert it from the spontaneous path of 'pure trade unionism,' the labor movement, including its political party, was bound to succumb to bourgeois influence. Why should this be so? Why must the spontaneous movement fall under the domination of bourgeois ideology? Lenin answers these questions as follows: "For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology; because it is more fully developed and because it possesses *immeasurably* more opportunities for being distributed." "It is often said," Lenin explains in a footnote, "the working class *spontaneously* gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true, in the sense that socialist theory defines the cause of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to appreciate it so easily, *provided,* however, that this theory does not step aside for spontaneity, and *provided* it subordinates spontaneity to itself. . . . The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism, but the more widespread (and continuously revived in the most diverse forms) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class still more."[1]

Stepping aside for spontaneity was not the only error committed by the Socialist League. It also went astray in its theory of the State.

Nurtured mainly on the doctrines of Bellamy and the Fabians, Australian socialists lacked the clear political insight which comes from an understanding of scientific Marxism. Almost twenty years before the labor movement in this country began to turn its attention to parliament, Marx, in the Civil War in France, had exposed the real character of that institution. "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. . . . Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search

1. Ibid, p. 64.

for the workmen and managers in his business."[1] "To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to misrepresent the people in parliament is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism."[2] It seems that Australian socialists were not well acquainted with this revolutionary-proletarian criticism of parliament by Marx. Even if they'd had access to the work in which it appeared it is most unlikely that they would have been capable of fully mastering its significance, having in mind the objective conditions prevailing in Australia at that time. The Socialist League considered that the labor party would spontaneously gravitate towards socialism; that it would ultimately win a majority in parliament; and would use this majority to usher in the new socialist era, peacefully and without revolution.

It has taken many years, filled with bitter experience, to teach even the more advanced elements among the Australian working class that emancipation from capitalism is not to be won by any such apparently easy and simple means. That the socialist goal cannot be reached by relying on any one sided method; either the exclusively parliamentary tactics of reformism, or the direct action of the syndicalists. This objective will only be achieved by the movement conducting a many sided struggle; a struggle on all fronts—the economic, political, and theoretical. And, to organise and lead this struggle, a party of a new type is required.

Several historical factors have combined to help Australian socialism overcome these early errors and reach a correct orientation. The behaviour of labor politicians in office, their complete subservience to the ruling class, soon exposed the fallacy of the idea of realising socialism through exclusively parliamentary action. During the first world war syndicalism made its appearance, partly as a form of revolt against reformism, and, for a time, aroused new hopes of socialism being attained through direct industrial action. But in its turn, when confronted with the organised political power of the ruling class, this trend also revealed its futility. The further development of capitalist industry, during and after the war, the rise of monopoly, and the more frequent and widespread intervention of the State in industrial disputes, helped the advanced thinkers in the labor movement to reach a better understanding of its shortcomings. At the same time these factors impelled them towards a greater interest in theory. The

1. The Civil War in France by Karl Marx. Selected Works, Vol. 11, p. 498/500. Martin Lawrence, London.

2. State and Revolution by Lenin, p. 36. Popular edition. Lawrence & Wishart, London.

war had completely unmasked the treachery of reformism and the bankruptcy of syndicalism. Australian socialists were already groping for a new orientation when the Russian Revolution took place. Lenin and the Bolsheviks showed in practice the way forward to socialism and Australian socialists were at last helped to find the right path. In 1920/22 a real revolutionary party was founded, which based itself on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism and set about the task of combining socialism with the mass labor movement.

B. THE FISCAL ISSUE DIVIDES LABOR.

The appearance of a separate workers' party on the political scene introduced some reality into party politics in Australia. Prior to this it was conflicting personalities, rather than divergent policies, which tended to create parliamentary groupings. "The only issue that really divided politicians before federation was the fiscal issue. Since that was practically settled by the seventies in Victoria and N.S.W., the politics of the largest colonies became a process of following the lead of some striking figure or of his more or less striking opponent. This did not mean liberalism or conservatism. Both parties claimed to be liberals, and would have been reckoned as liberals, according to European standards. In such circumstances a change of governments meant little difference to the policy of the country. Elections were won on promises to constituents rather than on principles." [1]

While Labor's entry into the parliamentary arena did not effect the fundamental basis of this system it did bring about some modifications in its detailed functioning. With its demands for 'social betterment' legislation the Labor party emphasised, if only to a limited extent, the class interests of the workers. These demands, while they did not immediately menace the political domination of the exploiters, nevertheless did threaten to encroach on their profits. Consequently the rise of the Labor party was bound to call forth a movement towards solidarity on the part of the older capitalist parties. This development was actually forecast by George Black, one of Labor's representatives in Parliament in 1891. "We shall forsake the cross benches for the opposition side of the House," he said, "and then we shall have arrayed against us . . . a coalition ministry composed of both free traders and protectionists." This is more or less just what happened in every State in the Commonwealth .

"First there was a cross bench period; then a period of official Labor opposition; finally a movement to the Treasury Benches. The

1. Australia: An Economic Interpretation by G. V. Portus, p. 74.

dates are different in the different parliaments, but the process of evolution is similar in all. In every parliament the distinctive groupings, since about 1908, have been Labor and anti-Labor."[1]

The Labor party contested 45 seats at the 1891 elections in New South Wales and won 36 of them. This gave it the balance of power between the Freetraders, led by Sir Henry Parkes (55 seats), and the Protectionists, led by Sir George Dibbs (50 seats). The Labor Party had anticipated some such result and had declared in advance that its policy would be to support whichever of the rival parties that promised most in return.

In adopting the motto, "Support in Return for Concessions," as their guiding slogan during the first years in parliament, Australian Labor politicians no doubt thought they were acting in a very shrewd and original manner. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. The originator of this theory, if they but knew it, was Ferdinand Lassalle, a radical bourgeois politician who helped found an independent workers' party in Germany in 1863. Lassalle subsequently became known as 'the father of opportunism' because, among other things, he urged the German workers to support the Prussian Chancellor, Bismarck, against the liberal bourgeoisie, in the hope that Bismarck in return would grant concessions to the labor movement. These tactics were condemned at the time by Marx, who described them as "sheer treachery" to the cause of the working class; they were "turning the German labor movement into a pillar of Prussian absolutism." The adoption and development of similar tactics in Australia had the effect of turning the labor movement, temporarily, into a pillar of support for Australian capitalism.

Sir Henry Parkes, whose Ministry had governed in the last parliament, made a bid for Labor's support by including in the Governor's Speech a number of Labor demands, such as electoral reforms, factory and shop acts, and so on. To counter this Dibbs moved a protectionist amendment to the Address in Reply, which split the Labor members and jeopardised the prospects of success for the policy of 'support in return for concessions.' The fiscal issue had been deliberately omitted from the Labor platform because of the great division of opinion between members and supporters on the subject. Candidates therefore felt free to adopt either viewpoint when electioneering. Some were thus returned as Freetraders and some as Protectionists. An impossible situation which could only arise in a party lacking "unity of will."

1. Ibid, p. 75.

Sir George Dibbs' amendment confronted the Labor Protectionists with a dilemma. If they voted with Dibbs they risked sacrificing the Labor legislation by Parkes; on the other hand, if they voted against Dibbs they risked 'putting themselves in bad' with their electors. The Labor Party tried to "square the circle" by seeking, in the absence of "unity of will," to establish "unity of action" through blind obedience to Caucus discipline. At the first meeting of Labor members following the elections a pledge was adopted that: "In order to secure solidarity of the Party only those will be allowed to assist in its private deliberations who are pledged to vote in the House as a majority of the members sitting in Caucus has determined." Twenty-seven members attended the meeting which carried this resolution and nineteen of them signed the requisite pledge. However, on the fiscal issue six members considered their duties to their constituents (read safety of their seats) to be of greater importance than the solidarity of the Party, and left it rather than submit to the majority decision to support Parkes.

This state of affairs where the members felt free to vote as they pleased on questions not covered by the Party programme could not be long tolerated, even in an opportunist party. For the policy of 'support in return for concessions' to be effective the party had to be in a position to render constant support to one side of the House or the other. If it were only going to support the Government on some issues and allow it to be defeated on others, it would obviously deprive itself of all bargaining power. Therefore the question of disciplining members to vote as a united bloc on all measures before the House occupied much of the Party's attention in the early period. The pledge adopted at the first meeting, to which reference has been made, did not meet with the approval of all the politicians. Many objected to being bound by a majority decision of Caucus. The dissension amongst the politicians led the Electoral League to intervene. At the January, 1892, Conference a resolution was adopted stating that it was the duty of the Labor Party to support any government, ". . . providing that a large portion of the labor platform was carried into law. . . ." At the November, 1893, Conference the League went further and carried the following motion:

A. That a Parliamentary Labor Party, to be of any weight, must give a solid vote in the House on all questions affecting the labor platform, the fate of the Ministry, etc., etc., and

B. That accordingly every candidate who runs in the Labor interest should be required to pledge himself not only to the fighting platform, but also to vote on every occasion specified in Clause A as

a majority in Caucus may decide."

In this way the movement tried to bring the politicians under control and maintain the solidarity of the Party. Labor's organisational structure, like its programme, was not derived from any theoretical principles, but was built up in the foregoing manner out of expediency.

Soon after the Conference the parliamentarians met and decided to resist the 'outside interference' of the Electoral League. Joseph Cook, the leader, was especially hostile to the pledge. Thus at this early stage a schism developed between the rank and file and the politicians, with the latter fighting for freedom to pursue unhampered their opportunist course in parliament. The Executive circularised the Leagues and found that 72 out of 84 endorsed the "Solidarity Pledge." Thereupon they declared that the recalcitrants were 'rats,' and expelled them from the Party. Fifteen "Solidarities," as the pledged men were called, and twelve "Independents" were returned in the 1894 elections. Among the "Solidarities" were W. M. Hughes and J. C. Watson, who had both come into prominence by championing the cause of the Executive against the politicians. We shall see later how such 'championing' of the interests of the movement against refractory sitting members has, in most cases, proved merely an easy road to political honours for the champions themselves. These crusaders, when safely ensconced in parliament, have seldom shown themselves to be different from the members they displaced. Such happenings are inevitable in a party without socialist principles. It is only of late years that a change for the better has taken place, and the struggle of the "outs" against the "ins" has began to acquire a new significance.

The 1895 Conference modified the pledge a little and three of the "Independents" returned to the fold. The others either dropped out of political life or found a niche in one of the open bourgeois parties. Joseph Cook was rewarded for his apostasy by the portfolio of Postmaster General in the Reid Administration.

The outcome of this first internal struggle was that the Annual Conference won for itself the right to be considered the supreme governing organ, framing the policy which the parliamentary representatives were expected to carry out. Between Conferences the Executive was to be the controlling body. The details of parliamentary tactics were left to the Caucus; the individual Labor member being pledged to obey its majority decisions. This system, which represents, as we have seen, an adaptation of the organisation to circumstances as they arose, came to form the basis of Labor's parliamentary organisation

and the means of regulating the relations between the parliamentary representatives and the movement as a whole. It was adopted with slight variations in the other States and in the Commonwealth. The further growth of the movement was accompanied by a further spontaneous development of this system. Throughout the history of the Labor Party there has been a continuous inclination on the part of the politicians to rebel against the discipline of Conference and the Executive. To counteract this tendency there has been a steady tightening up of the control exercised by these bodies over the politicians. However, this control has always been more nominal than real. When the principle of Conference and Executive power became more or less firmly established, the politicians sought other means of dominating the movement. Hand picked Conferences and Executives became the rule. Faked plebiscites and trick ballot boxes effectively nullified all attempts at democratic control. Instead of the parliamentary fraction being subordinated to the interests of the movement as a whole, it has nearly always dominated the Labor Party ideologically and organisationally.

C. THE A.L.P., A TWO CLASS PARTY.

The mixed composition of the Labor Party has been another source of internal conflict. The genuinely working class elements, organised in the trade unions, have often been at odds with the middle class elements attracted to the Leagues. Although it was the trade unions which actually founded the Party, membership was not confined to unionists and workers, but was thrown open to anybody who professed sympathy with the ideals of the movement and who was prepared to pay the annual membership fee. No attempt was made to regulate the composition of the Labor Party, which soon lost its distinctly working class character and became in fact a two class party, embracing both workers and petty bourgeoisie.

Gordon Childe relates how the following groups and sections were gradually attracted to the Labor Party, ". . . By sentimental bonds only, democrats and Australian nationalists; by economic interests, the small farmers and settlers, the prospectors and small mining proprietors and the small shopkeepers; by ties of self-interest, the Roman Catholic Church and perhaps certain business interests—notably the liquor trades. . . ."[1] Obviously the influx of such heterogeneous elements into a party which had no socialist principles and which

1. How Labor Governs by V. G. Childe, p. 74.

lacked any standards of theoretical and practical discipline, could only serve to strengthen the domination of bourgeois ideology over the movement.

There is nothing wrong in principle with the workers' party seeking to attract to its side the petty bourgeoisie. In fact, an alliance between the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie is indispensable to the successful outcome of the struggle against capitalism. But in entering into such an alliance the working class must not lose sight of its ultimate goal; it must not make any concessions in principle; it must retain its ideological and organisational independence; and occupy the leading role in the alliance. Otherwise, instead of an alliance directed against capitalism, there will result a mere merging of class interests, which will strengthen rather than undermine the domination of the bourgeoisie. To avoid this evil, and to ensure that the alliance is fully effective, the workers need a genuinely revolulutionary party, based on sound socialist theory, and having its own standards of proletarian-revolutionary discipline. The Labor Party was not such a party. It did not seek a class alliance with the petty-bourgeoisie against capitalism, but merely an electoral alliance which would win for it votes and seats in parliament. To effect this it was prepared to go to almost any lengths, and seldom hesitated to jettison working class planks from its platform when these threatened to cut across its vote-catching prospects. This has been the source of much friction within the Party. Since the Labor Party lacked a conscious aim, and since its programme was not drawn up in accordance with any well defined theoretical principles, but was framed on the basis of resolutions forwarded to Annual Conferences by Leagues and unions, it was comparatively easy for the middle class elements to exercise a dominating influence on policy. The parliamentarians materially assisted in bringing this about. Labor was dependent on the middle class vote to give it a majority in parliament. Consequently the politicians were ever ready to make concessions to this section, even at the expense of the solid core of trade union supporters. This form of opportunism has been the cause of many of the internal struggles which mark the history of the Labor Party; struggles which have taken the form of 'the unions v. the politicians,' the 'industrial v. the political wing,' and so on. Many of these struggles represented instinctive revolts on the part of the real proletarian elements in the unions against the petty-bourgeois ideology which dominated the movement, and against the politicians, who were held responsible for it. These spasmodic attempts to free the movement from opportunism.

and to bring it into closer correspondence with the aspirations of the workers, usually coincided with periods of crisis, during which the renegacy of the politicians was brought more to the forefront.

Often these struggles resulted in a number of politicians either leaving or being driven out of the Party. In many instances they found a more rightful place in one of the openly capitalist parties. Watson, Hughes, Cook, Pearce, Holman and Lyons are but a few of the more prominent among the many such "turn-coats." After each sortie a regrouping would take place, with new leaders appearing in place of the old, and, perhaps, some trifling amendments to the rules being made. But all attempts to change the character of the Party by these means have failed. As soon as the struggle had subsided and the vanquished had retired from the field, the movement settled down again into the same old opportunist course. The new leaders almost invariably repeated the history of the old, until, in time, they also became discredited. Then a new internal crisis would arise and a fresh struggle take place, with the whole sad cycle repeating itself over again. These periodical attempts of the rank and file to change the character of the party by changing its leading personnel have failed simply because they dealt with effects and not with causes. The failure of the Labor Party to advance the cause of the workers has not been due solely to bad leadership. The real fault lies with the whole policy and structure of the Party. This cannot be changed by sporadic and instinctive outbursts, but only by a sustained and conscious struggle on the part of the honest proletarian elements in the Party. A struggle to break the grip of bourgeois ideology; a struggle to cleanse the movement of opportunism; a struggle to bring it on to the path of socialism. This is no simple task. The traditions of past decades do not die easily. Those who undertake the fulfilment of this task are bound to encounter determined resistance from the 'labor lieutenants of capitalism,' who have entrenched themselves in the authoratative organs of the movement. The latter will use every means in their power to frustrate the efforts of those striving for progress. They will call into play every Draconian measure at their command to preserve their suzerainty over the movement. In all their efforts to conserve the non-socialist, bourgeois-liberal character of the Labor Party, the 'right-wing' will have the full support of the ruling class and its State. The task confronting the progressive elements inside the Labor Party, let it be repeated, is not an easy one. Nevertheless, it is a task which must be undertaken and carried through to the end

by those who wish to see the Labor Party really serve the cause of the working class.

D. THE ADVENT OF COMPULSORY ARBITRATION STRENGTHENS OPPORTUNISM.

Another factor which fostered the growth of opportunism in the Australian Labor movement was the advent of compulsory arbitration early in the present century. The Labor Party often, and quite wrongly, claims the doubtful credit for having originated this system. The facts are that arbitration did not derive from Labor at all. The pioneers of the idea were the bourgeois liberals, W. P. Reeves (in New Zealand), C. G. Kingston (in South Australia) and Alexander Peacock (in Victoria). These people were advocating arbitration in the 'eighties, when the unions were hostile[1] and the employers were as yet indifferent to the idea. The employers overcame their indifference after the exceedingly costly strikes in the '90's, and began to realise the advantages which arbitration had to offer. Within a few months after the defeat of the shearers' strike in 1891, Sir Henry Parkes prepared a measure providing for State arbitration in industrial disputes in New South Wales. Before the legislation could be implemented the Parkes Ministry was turned out of office to make way for the Government of Sir George Dibbs. The Trades Disputes Act passed by this government in 1892 embodied all the principles envisaged by Parkes. The detailed working of the Act proved unsatisfactory to the trade unions, who agitated for its repeal. The outcome was the substitution of a new Act in 1901. It was only during this period that the Labor Party became converted to the idea of compulsory arbitration. This conversion provides a clear indication of how the Labor Party was yielding to bourgeois influences. When the 1901 Bill was before the House, the conservative Premier, John See, remarked: "Apparently there is no difference of opinion on this subject between parties in this House. The Opposition put forward the measure as one of the planks of their platform. The Government certainly did so and made it one of the most prominent of their planks. The Labor Party (also) had made the measure one of the chief, if not

1. In 1884, G. R. Dibbs, formerly Chairman of the A.S.N. Co., addressed the Sydney Trades and Labor Council on the advantages of Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration. His proposals were turned down.

In 1888, Joseph Carrathurs referred a proposed Arbitration Bill to the Trades and Labor Council and the Northern Miners' Federation for their consideration. His proposals were likewise turned down.

the chief, plank in their platform."[1] Thus compulsory arbitration was not the result of exclusively labor or capitalist effort. It was the product of class collaboration, and as the instrument of class collaboration it continues to function to this day.

One immediate result of the passage of this legislation was a remarkably rapid growth of trade unionism. In the two years following the passage of Wise's Arbitration Act of 1901 no less than 111 new unions were organised in New South Wales, as compared with 26 new unions formed in the preceding ten years.[2] Many of the new unions were set up to enable the worst paid and hitherto unorganised workers to approach the Court for an Award. A tremendous influx, including many women workers, into the ranks of the organised labor movement took place. One effect of this was to strengthen still more the petty-bourgeois influences and to add to the difficulties for socialism.

Lenin makes the following comment on the problems created by the expansion of the labor movement: "One of the deeper causes which give rise to the periodical differences in regard to tactics is the very fact of the growth of the labor movement. If this movement be measured not by the standard of some phantastic ideal, but considered as a practical movement of ordinary people, it will become clear that the continued enrolment of fresh 'recruits' and the drawing in of new sections of the toiling masses must inevitably be accompanied by hesitations in theory and tactics, by the repetition of old mistakes and by the temporary return to obsolete views and methods, etc. The labor movement of every country spends more or less of its reserves of energy, attention and time on the 'training' of recruits."[3]

The Arbitration Court became one of the chief mediums through which concessions were yielded by Capital to Labor. It therefore seemed to the mass of workers newly entering the movement that the Court, rather than their own combination in unions, was responsible for their improved conditions. Thus there was born a naive faith in Arbitration, which was later strengthened by the conscious efforts of reformist leaders, and which is only beginning to pass away today.

The earlier awards of the New South Wales Court apparently did not please the employers, for when the Deakin Government passed

1. A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement by Brian Fitzpatrick, p. 108.
2. How Labor Governs by V. G. Childe, p. 94.
3. Differences in the European Labor Movement by Lenin, p. 80/81. Marx-Engels-Marxism.

a Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1904, Mr. E. E. Smith, President of the Employers' Federation, furiously attacked the measure. In an address to the Employers' Federal Conference he said: "It is purely class legislation, and is for the purpose of strengthening the labor unions. It is an experiment to increase the wages of the workers and to give them better conditions of employment in defiance of economic laws, and it will, in my opinion as a business man, prove an utter fallacy."[1] Mr. Smith's forecast 'as a business man' proved to be no more valuable than the average capitalist's forecast of market conditions. Far from Arbitration becoming an 'utter fallacy' it soon proved its sterling worth to the employing class, and was retained and further developed by them as a valuable adjunct to the State machine.

Mr. Justice Cohen, the first President of the New South Wales Court, constituted under the Act of 1901, showed a much better appreciation of reality than Mr. Smith. In one of his earliest judgments he quite frankly recognises the value of Arbitration as an instrument of class collaboration:

"Coming as I do freshly in contact with the unions, for I have not had the same vast experience in connection with them as my colleagues (the other two members of the Court represented the employers and employees respectively. E.W.C.), what I have so far had, has certainly removed, in a material measure, from my mind any prejudice that may have existed against the combination of workmen. I think that all parties are beginning to recognise—many have already recognised—that capital and labor are co-partners: that one is necessary to the other; that the welfare of capital means the welfare of labor; and the welfare of labor means the welfare of capital."[2]

Even Mr. Cohen was a bit late in waking up. Bourgeois economists had hit upon this 'great truth' more than half a century earlier and had been held up to ridicule by Marx: "The interest of the capitalist and that of the worker are . . . one and the same, so assert the bourgeoisie and their economists. They are indeed! The worker perishes if capital does not employ him. Capital perishes if it does not exploit labor power. . . . To say that the interests of capital and those of the workers are one and the same is only to say that capital and wage labor are two sides of one and the same relationship. The

1. A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement by Brian Fitzpatrick, p. 110.

2. New South Wales Arbitration Report, Vol. 1: Judgment; Breadcarters v. Langer.

one determines the other, as usurer and squanderer reciprocally condition the existence of each other. As long as the wage worker is a wage worker his lot depends upon capital. That is the much vaunted community of interests between worker and capitalist." [1]

The establishment of a Commonwealth Court in 1904 exercised a further modifying influence on the structure of trade unionism. Since the Commonwealth Court could only take cognisance of disputes extending beyond the boundaries of a single State, it could only be approached by Federal or interstate unions. This gave added impetus to the formation of All-Australian Trade Unions. In most cases these took the form of federation of existing State unions, wherein the State branches were left with considerable powers of local autonomy. This was considered necessary in order that the State branches could still conform to the several rules of the respective State Trade Union Acts and reap whatever benefits these conferred. There then ensued, on the part of the unions, the practice of playing the State and Federal Courts off against each other. In this tricky legal procedure many erstwhile militant trade union leaders were converted into 'bush lawyers,' who soon acquired a preference for windy verbal battles in the Court over the sterner, but much more effective, methods of industrial action. Now and again one or another of them would recapture for a brief instant a flash of the fighting spirit of the past. As, for instance, when the Queensland Court on one occasion reduced the wages of shearers, the union advocate, W. J. Riordan, bravely threatened the astonished judges that the A.W.U. would "kick like an elephant." Interested observers awaited with bated breath the sequel. There wasn't any. Riordan had unconsciously spoken the literal truth, for an elephant never kicks; this being a physical impossibility, as one amateur zoologist, schooled in the habits of the pachyderm, pointed out at the time. [2]

The original purpose of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904 was to prevent strikes and lock-outs in industries operating in two or more States. "The Act makes a strike or lock-out an offence if the dispute is within the ambit of the Act—if the dispute is one that extends beyond the limits of one State. In other words, the process of conciliation, with arbitration in the background, is substituted for the rude and barbarous processes of strike and lock-out. Reason is to replace force; the might of the State is to enforce peace between industrial combatants as well as between

1. Wage Labor and Capital, Karl Marx. Selected Works, pp. 267/8.

2. See Dawn to Dusk by Ernie Lane, p. 299.

other combatants; and all in the interests of the public."[1] But in practice the Court soon found that it had to deal with the question of wage fixation. The circumstances whereunder this came about are related by Mr. Justice Higgins, who became President of the Court in September, 1907:

"The first task that I had to face was not, strictly speaking, conciliation or arbitration. The Federal Parliament imposed certain excise duties on agricultural implements manufactured, but it provided for the remission of the duties in the case of goods manufactured under conditions, as to the remuneration of labor, which the President of the Court should certify to be "fair and reasonable." The Act gave no guidance as to the model or criterion by which fairness and reasonableness were to be determined. In dealing with the first employer who applied to me for a certificate, I came to the conclusion that the Act was designed for the benefit of employees, and that it was meant to secure for them something which they could not get by individual bargaining with their employers. If A let B have the use of his horse on the terms that B give the horse fair and reasonable treatment, B would have to give the horse proper food and water, shelter and rest. I decided, therefore, to adopt a standard based on "the normal needs of the average employee, regarded as a human being living in a civilised community." This was to be the primary test in ascertaining the minimum wage that would be treated as "fair and reasonable" in the case of unskilled laborers. At my suggestion, many household budgets were stated in evidence, principally by housekeeping women of the laboring class; and, after selecting such of the budgets as were suitable for working out an average, I found that in Melbourne, the city concerned, the average necessary expenditure in 1907 on rent, food and fuel in a laborer's household of about five persons, was £1/12/5; but that, as these figures did not cover light, clothes, boots, furniture, utensils, rates, life insurance, savings, accident or benefit societies, loss of employment, union dues, books and newspapers, tram or train fares, sewing machine, mangle, school requisites, amusements and holidays, liquors, tobacco, sickness or death, religion or charity, I could not certify that any wages less than 42/- per week for an unskilled laborer would be fair and reasonable. Then, in finding the wages which should be treated as fair and reasonable in the case of skilled employees, I relied mainly on existing ratios found in the practice of employers. If, for instance, the sheet iron worker got

1. A New Province for Law and Order by Henry Bournes Higgins, p. 2. London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1922.

8/- per day when the laborer got 6/-, the sheet iron worker should get, at the least, 9/- when the laborer's minimum was raised to 7/-."[1]

The standard thus arrived at by Mr. Justice Higgins, which became known as the 'Harvester Equivalent' (taking its title from the name of the firm concerned in the judgment — McKay's Sunshine Harvester Co.) was rapidly adopted by wages boards and arbitration tribunals all over Australia.

If we take 'fair and reasonable' wages to mean the value of labor power, we see how Mr. Justice Higgins, by empirical methods of reasoning, reaches exactly the same conclusions to which Marx was led by deduction, namely:

"The value of labor power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labor time necessary for the production, and consequently also the reproduction, of this special article . . . Labor power exists only as a capacity or power of the living individual. Its production consequently presupposes his existence. Given the individual, the production of labor power consists in his reproduction of himself or his maintenance. For his maintenance he requires a given quantity of the means of subsistence. Therefore the labor time requisite for the production of labor power reduces itself to that necessary for the production of those means of subsistence; in other words, the value of labor power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the laborer."[2]

"The Court is the exemplification and the epitome of Marx's law that wages are based on the amount, in the given conditions, necessary to keep the laborer in working condition and to ensure the 'reproduction of the race of workers'."[3]

The Harvester Judgment undoubtedly raised the standard of living in 1907. According to the President himself the increase amounted to over 27%. ". . . His conclusion was that a wage of 7/- per day, 42/- per week, was the least wage that would be sufficient for wholesome living in Melbourne, and the manufacturers were not paying so much. The wage at the time for the laborer was 5/- to 6/- per day . . . even for men in regular work, the average wage was not more than 5/6 per day, 33/- per week. This would mean that the standard was raised by over 27% in 1907 . . ."[4]

1. Ibid, page 3/4.
2. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, by Karl Marx, p. 189/190. First Modern Library Edition: New York, 1936.
3. The Trade Unions by L. Sharkey, p. 22. N.S.W. Legal Rights Committee, Sydney, 1942.
4. A New Province for Law and Order, p. 96/7.

This probably laid the foundations for the illusions in arbitration which became so firmly established in the Australian trade union movement. In the A.W.U. particularly, these illusions took firm root, and were cultivated assiduously by the bureaucrats in control.

When the London *Times* published a communication from Australia in March, 1920, stating that, "There is much discontent with the whole arbitration system, which official labor roughly condemns to be a failure," the Registrar brought it under the notice of Mr. Grayndler, the General Secretary of the A.W.U., and invited him to draft a reply. Mr. Grayndler wrote: "The statement . . . is quite contrary to facts . . . as General Secretary of the A.W.U. . . . I can say that my union is a strong supporter of the arbitration system. . . . The results obtained by the unions which have followed the arbitration system, during the last ten years, are far better than anything gained in Australia by direct action. . . ."[1]

What were these 'results' to which Mr. Grayndler makes reference? ". . . The shearers in the wool industry formed the original nucleus of this union; they are piece-workers; and they have had their rates raised from 20/- or 18/6 per 100 sheep in 1907 to 30/- per 100 in 1917; and the attendant shed hands, cooks, woolpressers, etc., have also gained proportionate increases. . . ."[2] And what were the economic circumstances in the industry? ". . . In 1901 the average export value of Australian wool per pound was well below eightpence. But in 1906/7 it had advanced to over tenpence. Moreover, the clip of 1906 exceeded two million bales for the first time in Australian history, so that, in the result, the wool season of 1906/7 was an extremely prosperous one . . . the average export value of wool declined to some extent between 1907 and 1910. There was a definite fall in 1908, although it was followed by a recovery in 1909. . . ."[3] "The average price of the clip exported, plus the cost of placing the wool on board ship, was 9.4d (greasy) and 16.36d (scoured) on the average of 1909/13. . . . In the war years 1916/19, the average price received for the clip was at the rate of 16.3d per pound. . . ."[4]

Quite obviously the squatters were well able to afford the increase in wages, and no doubt regarded this as a cheap price to pay for continuity of production.

1. Ibid, p. 87.
2. Ibid, p. 87.
3. Australian Labor Leader by Hon. H. V. Evatt, p. 245. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1942.
4. The British Empire in Australia by Brian Fitzpatrick, p. 414. Melbourne Uni Press.

Compulsory arbitration materially assisted the ruling class to corrupt the main body of Australian working class leaders. By providing these persons with well paid jobs on various boards, committees and commissions, it raised them to a privileged position, and converted them into its willing servants. Arbitration became one of the chief mediums for creating and maintaining in the ranks of the working class a body of 'labor lieutenants of capitalism.' A candid comment on this phenomenon appears in the report of a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Arbitration, presided over by Mr. Justice Piddington in 1913. In the section on 'The Attitude of the Unions Towards Strikes,' the report states:

"It was quite clear that not only do employers desire to see any fair and moderate legislation which will lessen the admitted evils of strike methods, but that the leaders of unionism in the States share the same aim and have advanced far beyond the mental attitude of those industrial leaders on the Continent and in England, as well as in America, who deprecate the introduction of compulsory arbitration and adhere to the strike weapon as one of the most valuable in the armoury of the reformer, and one the wielding of which ought on no account to be made illegal.

"No doubt the mental change wrought in men by constantly seeing and taking part in the judicial methods of investigation and consequent decree, which are a feature of the new system, has engendered (or perhaps increased) a distaste and distrust of the methods of trial by force and a willingness to abandon them and abide by the methods of trial by reason and law." [1]

However, not all of the working class leaders of Australia were taken in by the confidence trick of compulsory arbitration. One of the most popular revolutionary pamphlets of the period before the rise of the Communist Party was directed against this system. In 1917, Percy Laidler, pioneer Victorian Socialist and follower of Tom Mann, wrote Arbitration and the Strike, exposing the fallacy that the Arbitration Court could be used as a substitute for the strike. In this brilliant little pamphlet, of which more than 25,000 copies were sold in record time, he points out that:

"The great evil resulting from the era of Arbitration in the last twelve years or so has been that the working man has been deluded into regarding the Court as a substitute for strikes. Thus he has been encouraged to rely upon what this pamphlet proves is a broken reed. And inasmuch as he does this he fails to rely upon what is reliable—

1. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, January, 1914, page 849.

his union's capacity to strike."

In the main this twenty-five years' old criticism retains its general validity. It is still one of the major tasks of today to rid the labor movement of reliance on this "broken reed."

Other States besides New South Wales experienced an influx of new recruits to the labor movement in the early years of the present century. Queensland in particular saw a very rapid growth of unionism amongst hitherto unorganised sections of the workers. In 1907, after the failure of an unorganised strike at one of the small metalliferous mines in North Queensland a union was formed which adopted the title of Amalgamated Workers' Association. At first it was modelled on the Victorian A.M.A., but after a while the benefit section of its constitution was dropped and it became a purely fighting organisation. It grew rapidly on this militant basis, and, in 1908, merged with other unions functioning at O.K. Smelters and Mungana Mines. Later in the same year the navvies on the Chillagoe railway construction job were drawn in, after the union had helped them wage a victorious strike. The names of Theodore and McCormack are prominently associated with the A.W.A. and its transformation from a small miners' union into a powerful mass organisation. In 1910 the A.W.A. amalgamated with several other smaller unions and became a composite body, covering mining, railway construction and the sugar industry. In its constitution the A.W.A. followed the pattern of the already well established A.W.U. It became a highly centralised body with enormous power and authority vested in the Central Executive. In the early days this centralisation was a source of strength; it simplified tremendously the tasks of organisation and administration. But since it was not balanced by any democratic checks and safeguards, it also facilitated the growth of bureaucracy. With the general development of opportunism the leaders of the A.W.A. became more and more bureaucratic and began to misuse their authority against the membership. They diverted the organisation from its earlier militant path into the legal channels of arbitration and ultimately converted it into an instrument for their self-emancipation. Theodore amassed a considerable personal fortune out of politics and is now associated with the Melbourne multi-millionaire, John Wren, in the exploitation of the natives in the Fiji gold mining industry.

Another union formed contemporaneously with the A.W.A. was the Amalgamated Meat Industry Employees' Union. A Butchers' Union already existed which could trace its history back to 1880; but its operations had been confined to retail butchers and slaughtermen

in the metropolitan areas. In the early years of the century the meat export industry of Queensland was developing rapidly, and up-country meatworks were providing jobs for hundreds of new workers. The Butchers' Union resolved to organise all classes of labor in the meat industry in one big union and dispatched its organiser to the country. The organiser had great difficulty in contacting the workers in the up-country meatworks, since the employers put every obstacle in his way. However, conditions were very bad and gradually the workers were won over to unionism. In a relatively short period the A.M.I.E.U. became a force to be reckoned with in the North. It followed a vigorous and progressive policy and won many concessions for its members.

Thus by 1910 there existed in Queensland, besides a number of smaller craft unions, three large unions organised more or less on industrial lines. There was the A.W.A., taking in all kinds of general laborers; the A.W.U., covering pastoral workers; and the A.M.I.E.U., embracing meat workers. The question of the fusion of these three bodies soon became a paramount issue in the labor movement. A series of meetings and conferences took place which resulted in the A.W.A. and the A.W.U. amalgamating in 1913. The A.M.I.E.U. decided at the last moment to remain outside the merger. The new organisation took the name of the Australian Workers' Union, which was reconstituted on a basis which has been retained without much alteration till today.

Coinciding with this tremendously rapid growth and consolidation of unionism there took place a corresponding increase in the influence of the Labor Party. This body was nearing the time of its movement to the Treasury Benches, and was soon to reveal more clearly than ever the extent to which it had succumbed to bourgeois influences.

E. SUBJECTION TO BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY REVEALED BY LABOR IN OFFICE.

The first Commonwealth Labor Ministry was formed by J. C. Watson in April, 1904. Since it enjoyed but a brief span of life (some three or four months) it had no chance to develop its programme. Four years later a second Labor Ministry was set up by Andrew Fisher. It fared little better than its predecessor; lasting only six months. Like the Watson Cabinet the first Fisher Government had no opportunity for applying its policy. It was not until April, 1910,

that Labor was returned with a majority sufficient to form a stable government in the Commonwealth Parliament. In November of the same year McGowan led the Labor Party to an election victory in New South Wales. This gave unionists the first opportunity of testing in practice the theory that control of the government by their own elected representatives would bring about a change for the better in their conditions of life. The results were so disappointing that many supporters turned away from the Labor Party in disgust. Some were driven to the extreme course of repudiating all political action and embracing the doctrines of syndicalism.

One of McGowan's first duties on assuming office was to visit England for the Coronation. While he was away a crisis developed in the Party owing to the Minister for Lands, Neils Neilson, showing too much zeal in carrying out the Party's programme. One important point in the latter was "The Immediate Cessation of Crown Land Sales," which was regarded as a step towards Labor's objective—The Nationalisation of the Land. This plank, of course, was none too popular with the land monopolists, who exercised a dominating influence in the country electorates. Nor was it popular among the farmers generally. Even the small farmers looked on it with a certain amount of suspicion; chiefly because they did not understand its real significance and thought that it might result in a loss of their equity in their holdings.

No steps were taken by the Labor Party to correct this false impression and to teach the small farmers how Land Nationalisation would be to their benefit. Country members of the Labor Party preferred the easier course of side-stepping or ignoring this plank in their electioneering campaigns. Consequently, when Neils Neilson announced his intention of giving full effect to the Party's land programme, country members were thrown into a panic. The preceding Wade Ministry had passed a Conversion Act, which allowed people who had taken up leases of Crown land to convert their holdings into freehold. Neilson proclaimed that he was going to repeal this legislation. Two country members resigned from the Party in protest. This deprived Labor of its slender majority in the House and threatened it with defeat. However, it managed to scramble back into office again by repudiating Neilson and forcing him to resign from Parliament. Caucus added insult to this injury to Neilson by getting the Executive to endorse one of the recalcitrant country members to contest the seat against him. This caused the 1913 Annual Conference to adopt a resolution expressing disapproval of the Executive's action.

Undeterred by this adverse vote the politicians, during the next session, not only failed to give effect to the platform, but acted most cynically in breaking two more of its most cherished planks—The Abolition of the Upper House and the Establishment of a State Iron and Steel Works. The Annual Conference had formulated a "suicide pledge" to be signed by all Labor nominees to the Upper House. This pledge bound them to vote for the abolition of this chamber or to resign their seats. But when the McGowan Government made new appointments to the Legislative Council it was found that only a minority had been asked to sign the pledge. Furthermore, one of the new appointees was Sir Allan Taylor, Lord Mayor of Sydney, and a bitter anti-labor conservative. Plank six of the fighting platform, which called for a State Iron and Steel Works, was thrown overboard, when the Cabinet decided to let the B.H.P. acquire, for a purely nominal consideration, the valuable water front site at Port Waratah on which to erect their own private iron and steel works. These incidents helped to open the eyes of many workers to the real character of the Labor Party. McGowan carried this process of disillusionment a stage further in 1913, when he issued a proclamation calling for scabs to break the strike being conducted by Sydney gasworkers. After this brazen effort he was compelled to step down from leadership of the Labor Party to make way for Holman, who soon showed he was little better.

W. A. Holman, unlike most labor leaders, could claim some acquaintance with theory. In April, 1892, at the age of 21, he was specially selected by the Socialist League to represent its views before a Select Committee which had been set up to investigate the question of establishing a post-office savings bank and a national bank. In September and October, 1893, he delivered a series of public lectures on socialism and economics, including one on the teachings of Marx. Holman's final laudatory remarks upon the great founder of scientific, proletarian-revolutionary, socialism make interesting reading, in the light of the speaker's subsequent history.

"I have no desire to do anything else than place before you an unvarnished tale. I have no authority to explain Marx's views. I have studied Marx with devotion, and have put the results before you. If I have been able to clear up any matter of difficulty, I have been more than recompensed for my trouble. Marx placed the case against capitalism and the agitation for the overthrow of the capitalist system upon a sound intellectual basis. Before him there were many men, who, stirred to their emotional depths by their sympathy, had risen

against the capitalistic evil, Carlyle, most of all. Marx brought the calm and unimpassioned glance of science, mature deliberation and keen inquiry to bear upon the question. He regarded the evils of society not merely as exciting horror or pity but as phenomena to be examined in the dry light of reason, to be traced to their causes in order that sufficient remedies should be found. He of all men devoted himself to discover the laws which underlay society. His prophecies have been fulfilled, other men have prophesied, John Stuart Mill in his well known chapter in his Future of the Working Classes, and Carlyle, in his Past and Present. Comte also ventured in his Positive Philosophy to set down his ideas as to the future, and of all these men, Marx alone had been justified in his predictions. That alone was a sufficient claim upon the suffrages of mankind. He arose where all was chaos. He found a jungle complete in darkness and left it illumined and radiant in the light of his own gigantic intellect." [1]

Notwithstanding this panegyric, it must be said that Holman lacked a complete understanding of Marxism. His appreciation of Marx was altogether one-sided. Marx the political economist, Marx the 'calm and unimpassioned' scientist, were known to him, but Marx the passionate proletarian fighter for socialism was a complete stranger. There was a great deal of "Economism" in the intellectual make-up of Holman, which helps to explain his preference for the path of gradualism. This trait was revealed already in the lecture previously quoted. In his opening remarks, Holman said:

". . . I insist, however, on this point; that I am not going to lecture upon socialism, but upon economics and upon the advances which have been made in the science during the past half century. But economic science is one thing; social reform is another. . . ." [2]

Holman played no part in the great strike struggles of the 'nineties. "Holman was not brought into the strike and still followed his cabinet-making trade at the Darlington shop. He surveyed the exciting panorama of events with the closest attention, and drew several conclusions. . . ." [3] These were on a par with the conclusions drawn by the Menshevik, Plekhanov, after the defeat of the 1905 revolution in Russia. "They should not have taken up arms," was Plekhanov's cry. "They should never have gone on strike," was the opinion formed by Holman. [4]

1. Australian Labor Leader by The Hon. H. V. Evatt, p. 40/41.
2. Ibid, p. 39.
3. Ibid, p. 23.
4. Ibid, p. 23/4.

Unless a wrong inference should be drawn from the evidence of erudition contained in Holman's early lectures, it must be stated that his interest in theory was only superficial. ". . . he delighted in repeating the analogous case of William Morris who, when asked "Does Comrade Morris accept Marx's theory of value?" said:

"I am asked if I believe in Marx's theory of value. To speak quite frankly I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know. Truth to say, my friends, I have tried to understand Marx's theory, but political economy is not in my line, and much of it appears to me to be dreary rubbish. But I am, I hope, a Socialist none the less. It is enough political economy for me to know that the idle class is rich and the working class is poor, and that the rich are rich because they rob the poor. That I know because I see it with my own eyes. I need read no books to convince me of it. And it does not matter a rap, it seems to me, whether the robbery is accomplished by what is termed surplus value, or by means of serfage or open brigandage. The whole system is monstrous and intolerable, and what we Socialists have got to do is to work together for its complete overthrow, and for the establishment in its stead of a system of co-operation where there shall be no masters and no slaves, but where everyone will live and work jollily together as neighbours and comrades for the equal good of all. That, in a nutshell, is my political economy and social democracy." [1]

This form of 'practical socialism' or 'socialism without theory' soon became the Credo of Holman, Hughes and Co. The personal debacle experienced by these individuals in 1916 only serves to epitomize the bankruptcy of this trend. "Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement," [2] no movement towards socialism. 'Practical socialism' or 'socialism without theory' is not socialism at all but bourgeois liberalism masquerading in socialist guise. "Since there an be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement *the only choice is*: either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a 'third' ideology, and moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above class ideology). Hence to belittle socialist ideology *in any way* ('I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm damned if I want to know'—a favourite quotation of Holman's) *to deviate from it in the slightest degree* means strengthening burgeois ideology." [3]

1. Ibid, p. 9.

2. What is to be Done?, Lenin. Selected Works, Vol. 2, p. 47.

3. Ibid, p. 62.

Instead of obeying Dr. Evatt's behest that we should "gather up the gentle spirit of the dead . . . speak more softly afterwards in the face of other things," [1] we should speak the truth and say that Holman's contribution to the Australian Labor Movement was that he helped to bring it under the domination of bourgeois ideology. He thus merits castigation, not canonization.

The Federal Labor Party, up to the time of the Conscription split, escaped the serious criticism from the rank and file which came the way of the State parties. For one thing Federal politics were as yet remote from the everyday lives of trade unionists; for another thing the Federal programme was less controversial than the State programmes. Besides which, it seems, the Fisher government really tried to carry out the moderate reformist programme laid down for it by the movement. It took the war crisis to reveal that the whole party, Federal and State, was permeated with opportunism, completely dominated by bourgeois ideology and utterly subservient to the interests of Australian capitalism. The first imperialist world war provided a real test for working class parties throughout the world. Only the Bolshevik Party of Russia proved capable of meeting this test and emerging from it with flying colours. All of the other parties in the international labor movement succumbed in one way or another to the war fever and became parties of social-chauvinism, taking the side of their own ruling class against the interests of the working class. The Australian Labor Party was no exception to the general rule.

1. Australian Labor Leader, p. 574.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR EXPOSES THE FUTILITY OF REFORMISM AND ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

A. THE ATTITUDE OF THE LABOR PARTY TOWARDS THE WAR.
B. THE PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITY OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.
C. THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MOVEMENT.
D. THE 1917 GENERAL STRIKE.
E. THE ATTEMPTS TO FORM ONE BIG UNION.

A. THE ATTITUDE OF THE LABOR PARTY TOWARDS THE WAR.

When war broke out in August, 1914, the Cook Liberal Government had already decided to hold a Federal election on September 15. It wanted to get rid of the Labor majority in the Senate and had precipitated a double dissolution on the question of preference to unionists. With the declaration of war the Labor Party proposed a political truce. W. M. Hughes and other leaders made public statements offering to withdraw from elections for the duration of the war if the Liberals would do likewise. The Liberal Party, however, felt confident that it would win the pending elections and consequently rejected Labor's offer. It so happened that this confidence had no justification, for Labor was returned with a majority in both Houses and formed the new government, which was led by Andrew Fisher.

The parties were not at all divided on the question of the war. In the election campaign both sides made it clear that they fully supported the war aims of the Empire. The attitude of the Labor Party was defined in a Manifesto which stated:

"As regards the attitude of Labor towards the war, that is easily stated. War is one of the greatest realities of life and it must be faced. Our interests and our very existence are bound up with those of the Empire. In time of war half measures are worse than none. If returned with a majority we shall pursue, with the utmost vigour and determination, every course necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire, in any and every contingency, regarding as we do such a policy as the first duty of the government. At this juncture the electors may give their support to the Labor Party with the utmost confidence."

The whole history of the Labor Party, from 1891 to 1914, prepared it for the adoption of just such a policy. No other attitude could have been expected from a non-socialist, bourgeois liberal labor

party. The Australian Labor Party, as we have seen, right from its very inception turned its back on the class struggle, rejected socialism and working class internationalism. The Objective of the party, adopted in 1908, was:

"a) The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community.

"b) The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the economic functions of the State."

Nothing could reveal more clearly than this Objective how far removed was the Labor Party from Socialism. The class divisions of modern society are overlooked; the independent class interests of the workers are ignored; and for proletarian internationalism there is substituted bourgeois nationalism of the worst kind.

Lenin was completely justified in writing as he did in 1913 that:

"The Australian Labor Party does not even claim to be a Socialist Party. As a matter of fact, it is a liberal bourgeois party and the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives. . . . The leaders of the A.L.P. are trade union officials, an element which everywhere represents a most moderate and 'capital serving' element, and in Australia it is altogether peaceful and purely liberal." [1]

The Labor Party's attitude of support for the imperialist war therefore flowed logically from its whole outlook and practice in the preceding period. It is true that the Australian Labor Party was not affiliated to the Second International and consequently was not bound to the Anti-War Resolution adopted by that body at Stockholm, 1910, and at Basle, 1912. But this in no way lessens the guilt of those Australian labor leaders who betrayed the workers' cause and led them into the imperialist war.

True to its election promises to do all possible to win the war for the ruling class, the Labor Party, within a month of its return to office, introduced two Acts which were to play a prominent part in the future life of the Commonwealth. These were the War Precautions Act and the Crimes Act. Both were ostensibly war measures but, as we shall see, free use was made of them to curb militant working class activity and to railroad insurgent elements into gaol.

The overwhelming majority of reformist trade union leaders shared the official labor outlook on the war. Many of them hastened to show their patriotism, not by enlisting, but by sponsoring resolutions calling on their members to forego overtime rates and other privileges

1. Australia Marches On by L. L. Sharkey, p. 6/7.

for the 'duration'.

So far as the rank and file workers were concerned there was no marked enthusiasm for the war. At the outset they were confused and led astray by their leaders and for a time were deceived by the bourgeois propaganda that it was 'a war for democracy,' a 'war to end all wars' and so on. Many were forced into the army by economic pressure, many more were enticed to join up by the fallacious argument that if the Empire were defeated Prussian militarism would overrun the world and thus put an end to all their hard won liberties. The workers were too immature politically to realise, and the Socialists were not in a position to make them see that there was another alternative, namely, the defeat of both British and German imperialism by the international working class. This path was mapped out by the Extraordinary International Socialist Congress at Basle, November 24/25, 1912, whose Manifesto declared:

"If a war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved, supported by the co-ordinating activity of the International Socialist Bureau, *to exert every effort in order to prevent the outbreak of war by the means they consider most effective?* which naturally vary according to the sharpening of the class struggle and the sharpening of the general political situation.

In case war should break out anyway, it is their duty *to intervene in favour of its speedy termination* and with all their powers to utilise the *economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule.*"[1]

The Bolshevik Party was the only party in the International which acted consistently in accordance with the spirit of this resolution. Under Lenin's slogan, "Turn the Imperialist War Into Civil War," the Bolsheviks did, with all their power, utilise the economic and political crisis created by the war to arouse the people, and thereby brought about an end to the class rule of the landlords and capitalists in the great Socialist Revolution of November, 1917.

The only opposition to the imperialist war in Australia came from a few small groups of international socialists, who lacked any mass influence, and the Industrial Workers of the World. On the Sunday following the outbreak of war the I.W.W. unfurled a banner over its meeting in the Sydney Domain on which was inscribed the challenging query, "War, What For?" A forceful team of speakers proceeded to answer from the platform that it was a war for markets, a war for sources of raw material, a war for profits, a war in the interests of

1. Collected Works of V. I. Lenin, Vol. XVIII. The Imperialist War. Appendix 11, page 468/9. Martin Lawrence, London.

capitalism and against the interests of the working class. The I.W.W. continued to voice its revolutionary opposition to the war until it was suppressed under Hughes' Unlawful Association Act in 1916.

In view of the important role played by the I.W.W. in the struggle against the war and conscription, and in view of the big influence which it exerted for a time in the Australian labor movement, it is well to digress here and elaborate somewhat on the history of this organisation.

B. THE PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITY OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.

The I.W.W. was founded in America in 1905 by the Socialist Labor Party, whose leader was Daniel De Leon. De Leon called himself a Marxist, but his knowledge of Marxism was far from complete. He was a good example of the type of labor leader referred to by Lenin as having mastered ". . . only certain aspects of Marxism, only certain parts of the new world conception, or individual slogans and demands. . . ."[1] The Socialist Labor Party was a most sectarian body which carried out propaganda for 'pure socialism' and held itself aloof from the struggle for immediate demands.

A Socialist Labor Party was established in Australia in 1897, which also based itself on the one-sided doctrines of De Leon, and, like its American counterpart, segregated itself from the masses. Some two years after the establishment of the I.W.W. in America the Socialist Labor Party here fostered clubs to spread the new doctrines of industrial unionism. These early I.W.W. Clubs were subordinated to the S.L.P., which exercised strict control over their activities. Many clubs chafed under this rigid control and felt that insufficient scope was allowed for developing their propaganda for industrial unionism.

In 1908 differences of opinion concerning the future relations between the I.W.W. and the S.L.P. led to a split in the American organisation. The adherents of De Leon wanted to retain affiliation with the S.L.P. and to continue under its political direction. The extreme syndicallist elements, led by Trautmann, would not accept this. They considered that industrial action should take precedence over political action, and that the I.W.W. should not be tied to any political party. The opposing factions came to be known as the Detroit I.W.W. (De Leon followers) and the Chicago I.W.W. (Trautmann supporters), taking these titles from the names of the towns which they made their headquarters.

It was the Chicago, or extreme syndicalist, wing which gained the ascendency here in Australia. In 1908 a Local was set up in Adelaide which secured a Charter from the Chicago body authorising

1. Differences in the European Labor Movement.

it to act as the Continental Administration for Australia, with the right to issue Charters to new branches which might be formed in other parts. In 1913 the Sydney Branch, which received its original Charter from Adelaide, became the headquarters for the movement in Australia.

The principles of the I.W.W., as set out in the preamble to the constitution in 1905, were as follows:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

"Between these two classes a struggle must go on until all the toilers come together on the political, as well as on the industrial field, and take and hold that which they produce by their labor through an economic organisation of the working class, without affiliation with any political party.

"The rapid gathering of wealth and the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands make the trade unions unable to compete with the ever-growing power of the employing class, because the trade unions foster a state of things which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping to defeat one another in wage wars. The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

"These sad conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organisation formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all."[1]

Following the split in 1908 the Detroit faction disintegrated entirely and the Chicago faction remained as the I.W.W. It changed the set of principles adopted in 1905, by rejecting all mention of political action. The second paragraph of the preamble was altered to read:

"Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wages system."

And two new paragraphs were added:

"Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system.'

"It is the historical mission of the working class to do away with

1. The History of the American Working Class by Anthony Bimba, p. 230//231. International Publishers Co., Inc. U.S.A., 1927.

capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." [1]

By this action the I.W.W. became a purely industrial body, categorically rejecting even the necessity for a political party of the working class.

Concerning the methods of the I.W.W., Vincent St. John, its one time secretary in America, states:

"As a revolutionary organisation the Industrial Workers of the World aims to use any and all tactics that will get the results sought with the least expenditure of time and energy. . . .

"No terms made with an employer are final. All peace, so long as the wage system lasts, is but an armed truce. . . .

"The I.W.W. realises that the day of successful long strikes is past. . . .

"The I.W.W. maintains that nothing will be conceded by the employers except that which we have the power to take and hold by the strength of our organisation. Therefore we seek no agreements with the employers.

"Failing to force concessions from the employers by strikes, work is resumed and 'sabotage' is used to force the employers to concede the demands of the workers." [2]

The dogmas of the I.W.W. may be paraphrased and restated in a summarised form as follows:

a) There can be no peace in industry while capitalism lasts. Therefore, apart altogether from whether the objective conditions warrant it, the thing to do is to fan the flames of class war by strikes, sabotage, go-slow or any other means which present themselves.

b) Through the class struggle the workers will be brought together so that some day in some way they will spontaneously revolt and take possession of the means of production.

c) The concentration of production has rendered craft unionism obsolete. Therefore the craft unions must be supplanted by new industrial unions.

d) Sectional strikes have no value and should be dispensed with in favour of the general strike.

e) When the collapse of capitalism has been effected the new industrial unions will blossom forth as production syndicates, assuming the tasks of management in the new society.

1. Ibid, p. 231. 2. Ibid, page 232.

It will be noticed that no consideration whatsoever is given to the question of the State—"The root question in all politics."[1] The I.W.W. shared the opinions of the anarchists and anti-authoritarians generally, on this vital issue. They regarded all forms of State power as being an abomination and thought that the rule of authority would be brought to an end with the collapse of capitalism. They couldn't conceive the need for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the period of transition from capitalism to communism.

Ridiculing the anarchists and their repudiation of politics, Marx wrote in 1873:

"If the political struggle of the working class assumes violent forms, if the workers set up their revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar, everyday needs, in order to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the State, they give the State a revolutionary and transitory form. . . .[2]

"Engels enlarges on the same ideas in even greater detail and more simply. First of all he ridicules the muddled ideas of the Proudhonists, who call themselves 'anti-authoritarians', i.e., they repudiate every sort of authority, every sort of subordination, every sort of power. Take a factory, a railway, a ship on the high seas, said Engels—is it not clear that not one of these complex technical units, based on the employment of machinery and the ordered co-operation of many people, could function without a certain amount of subordination and, consequently, without some authority or power?

"'. . . If the autonomists would confine themselves to saying that the social organisation of the future will restrict authority to the limits in which the relations of production make it inevitable, we could understand each other, but they are blind to all facts which make the thing necessary, and they hurl themselves against the world.

"'Why don't the anti-authoritarians confine themselves to crying out against political authority, against the State? All socialists are agreed that the State, and with it political authority, will disappear as the result of the coming social revolution, i.e., that public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over real social interests. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the political state should be abolished at once, even before the social conditions which brought it into being have been abolished. They demand that the first act of

1. Lenin's Lecture on the State.
2. State and Revolution, Lenin, p. 46/7. Lawrence & Wishart, London. Pop. Ed.

the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority." [1]

The I.W.W. considered that the overnight 'abolition of authority' would leave the working class with purely economic functions to fulfil and that these would be carried out by the new industrial unions; hence, "By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

There were three main points in the I.W.W. creed which appealed to fairly wide sections of Australian workers; 1) the propaganda for industrial unionism; 2) the criticism of Wages Boards and Arbitration Courts; and 3) the denunciation of reformist union officials and labor politicians. The workers were themselves becoming aware of the growing inadequacy of the craft unions in view of the rapid development of monopoly. They naturally lent a willing ear to any proposals designed to strengthen their 'citadels'. The Wages Boards and Arbitration Courts had now been functioning long enough to reveal something of their true character, and workers generally were becoming fed up with the long delays associated with the ventilation of their grievances through the Courts. They were already beginning to contrast the meagre results obtained from arbitration with those achieved by direct action in an earlier period. Consequently they were in a receptive mood for the I.W.W. propaganda directed against the whole system. Finally there was the conduct of the Labor Party in office and its spineless subservience to the ruling class which turned many workers in the direction of syndicalism.

In 1914 there were four I.W.W. Locals active in Adelaide, Sydney, Broken Hill and Port Pirie, but its influence already extended far beyond its small membership. In evidence of this the Executive of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council was called on in 1907 to report on a proposal to reorganise the trade unions on I.W.W. lines. The proposal was rejected but the I.W.W. itself was acknowledged to be "another phase of the unionist movement in which the distinctive badge of craftism is merged in the greater humanity. . . ." In the same year a Trade Union Congress was held in New South Wales and a resolution was put forward by the delegates from Newcastle recommending the adoption of the I.W.W. Preamble. This met with considerable support, but it also encountered opposition from the craft union officials and aspirants for parliamentary honours who were present at the Congress. After considerable debate it was defeated. These initial setbacks did not arrest the spread of I.W.W. influence. In July, 1907, the coal miners in New South Wales and Victoria federated. Prior to this there had been three separate federations in the Northern, Southern and Western districts of New South Wales,

1. State and Revolution, Lenin, p. 47/8.

as well as the Victorian organisation. The chief credit for bringing these bodies together into one Federation belongs to Peter Bowling, a miners' leader and member of the I.W.W. In 1908 a strike took place among tramwaymen in Sydney and Holman, deputy leader of the Labor Party, claimed that the I.W.W. were responsible.

More evidence of the spread of I.W.W. influence was provided in 1909, when the Broken Hill miners went on strike. At the height of the struggle the leaders were arrested and charged with seditious conspiracy. Wade, the Premier, transferred the scene of the trial from the Barrier to Albury. This was regarded by unionists as evidence of the Government's intentions to secure a conviction by fair means or by foul. Feeling ran high in trade union circles and considerable support was found for the I.W.W. propaganda for a general strike. Peter Bowling moved in this direction at the Trade Union Congress which met in Sydney a few days before the trial was scheduled to take place. It was defeated by a narrow majority.

A few months later the coal miners came out on strike to rectify a number of outstanding grievances and again it seemed likely that the I.W.W. plans for a general stoppage would be realised. Peter Bowling exerted himself to bring this about. Negotiations were opened with the waterside workers as a first step in this direction. At this stage the Government intervened and proposed to the miners that they return to work pending a compulsory conference. This idea was rejected by the miners who continued the discussions with the wharfies with a view to extending the struggle. In an attempt to intimidate the workers the Government caused Bowling and other strike leaders to be arrested and charged with violating the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act. Under pressure bail was agreed to and they were turned loose. W. M. Hughes, who at the time was leader of the Waterside Workers' Union, had one eye on the pending Federal elections in which he was a candidate, and was anxious to avoid becoming involved in the dispute. At the first available opportunity he broke off negotiations with the miners, who thereupon declared that they would continue the struggle alone. This schism proved to be just what the Premier, Wade, had been waiting for. He immediately rushed through both Houses of Parliament a Bill to amend the Industrial Disputes Act. This new Coercion Act, or 'Leg Iron Bill' as it came to be known in union circles, placed strikes in certain specified industries in a special category and forbade them under severe penalties. Police were given exceptionally wide powers under this legislation and persons charged with offences against it were deprived of the right of trial by jury. No sooner was the ink dry upon the Governor's signature of assent than Bowling and his colleagues

were again arrested and thrown into gaol. This time bail was not allowed and the strike leaders remained in prison until they were sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. Under these circumstances the strike soon collapsed.

This serious set-back checked for a time the growth of the I.W.W. But with the outbreak of war it soon revived and began to make even more rapid headway. Early in 1915 new Locals were established in Melbourne and Brisbane. In the following year branches were set up in Freemantle and on the Western Australian goldfields. Locals also sprang up at different centres in North Queensland. The I.W.W. was well on the way to becoming a nation wide organisation. Early in 1914 it began to publish a weekly newspaper, "Direct Action," which reached a circulation of 14,000.

The first leading article in this paper is most interesting. It not only offers a fair sample of the I.W.W. philosophy, but at the same time indicates how it was that the I.W.W. was incapable of providing the workers with a leadership alternative to the A.L.P.:

"For the first time in the history of the working class movement in Australia," this leader states, "a paper appears which stands for straight out direct actionist principles, unhampered by the plausible theories of the parliamentarians, *whether revolutionary or otherwise....*" (My emphasis. E.W.C.)

The I.W.W. thus rejected all parliamentary action. It made no distinction between reformist politics and revolutionary politics. This was one of the major theoretical weaknesses of the I.W.W. To reject politics entirely is to leave this sphere exclusively to the bourgeoisie, to leave them in undisturbed control of the State. The Australian workers had learned from their experience in the 'nineties just what this means, and had sought instinctively to overcome it by forming their own party. The A.L.P. failed the workers, not because it engaged in parliamentary activity, but because, lacking in socialist principles, it raised this form of struggle to the level of an all embracing, one sided, theory, and subordinated to it all other forms of the class struggle. This contributed to the A.L.P. sinking deeper and deeper into the bog of opportunism and to its coming more and more under bourgeois influences. The task confronting socialists was to rescue the workers' movement from this swamp, to rid it of opportunism, to give it a conscious purpose and to reduce parliamentary action to its proper perspective as one of many (and not the most important) of the different forms of class struggle. The I.W.W. was theoretically and organisationally incapable of tackling this great task. It swung to the opposite extreme and rejected political action entirely. Thus, in spite of its revolutionary opposition to the war, it was unable to

mobilise the Australian workers for a socialist way out.

Most of the propaganda and activity of the I.W.W. bears the same negative character as its attitude towards parliamentarism. It denounced craft unionism, it denounced arbitration, it denounced the Labor Party, etc. But the successful prosecution of the class struggle calls for much more than a bald denunciation of the evils of capitalism; it calls for constructive as well as destructive effort; it calls for ability to tackle and solve in a positive manner all the problems which confront the labor movement at the different stages of its development. This is where the I.W.W. failed. Because of its own one-sidedness and sectarianism, because of its unsound theory it was unable to find a constructive answer to the difficult questions which history put before the Australian labor movement during the first imperialist world war.

The organisational structure of the I.W.W. reflected its unsound theoretical principles.On paper this scheme provided for six main production departments: 1) Agriculture; 2) Mining; 3) Transport and Communication; 4) Manufacture; 5) Construction; 6) Public Service. Within these main departments room was left for industrial unions in the narrower sense. For instance, department 3 would be subdivided into unions for railwaymen, seamen, road transport workers and so on. These smaller bodies would have their own executives which would be subordinated to the Department Executives. These in turn would be subordinated to the General Executive Council. These plans never emerged from the blue print stage of development. Only a mere skeleton form of organisation was actually created, with a General Executive in Sydney and a number of Locals scattered throughout the Commonwealth. Consequently the I.W.W. was not equipped to stand up to the political struggle which, notwithstanding its own doctrines, the State and Federal authorities forced upon it. When the leaders were arrested in 1916 the organisation was crippled. It attempted to carry on but lacked the necessary means. For a time "Direct Action" continued publication and Domain meetings were held as usual. But early in 1917 when a mass round up of members was carried out and Tom Barker and other leaders were deported the I.W.W. was finally crushed.

The I.W.W. was declared an illegal organisation in December, 1916, under the Unlawful Associations Act put through by the Labor Government of W. M. Hughes. But the twelve members, who had been arrested prior to this, were proceeded against by the Crown under the common law on trumped up charges of "conspiracy to commit arson and sedition." They were sentenced by Mr. Justice Pring to terms of imprisonment ranging from 5 to 15 years. A vigorous cam-

paign was launched among the working class, demanding their release. In 1918 a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the case, but the twelve remained in gaol, the Commissioner, Mr. Justice Street, declaring that, "nothing could be done." However, organised labor showed that something could be done, and the sustained agitation resulted in a second Royal Commission being appointed in 1920. The new Commissioner, Mr. Justice Ewing, found that four of the Crown witnesses in 1916 were "liars and perjurers." Three of them, David Goldstein, Louis Goldstein and Scully, were trying to gain immunity from prison in reward for their perjured evidence, while the fourth, McAlister, was himself a member of the I.W.W. and involved in a conspiracy to commit arson. "The conviction of the prisoners," Mr. Justice Ewing said, "had perforce to depend to a very large extent upon the evidence of these witnesses."

C. THE ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MOVEMENT.

Early in 1915 the question of Conscription for overseas service came under discussion in Australia. Compulsory service for home defence was already on the Statute Book, Labor having been to the forefront in placing it there. As early as 1903 W. M. Hughes, supported by his colleagues, Watson and Spence, moved in Parliament for the adoption of compulsory military training. In the same year the Federal Parliament passed a Defence Act which empowered the Governor-General to call out the Citizen Forces for war service. This Act was amended in 1909 to render all male inhabitants between the ages of 18 and 60 liable to service in the Citizen Forces in time of war. In 1911 a Cadet system became operative for training boys between 14 and 17 years of age. A plan for adult training was scheduled to follow. A bitter controversy broke out around the principle of compulsion. Hughes and the main body of Labor leaders vigorously defended this principle and denounced its critics, who favoured voluntarism. The chief opposition to compulsory service came from small groups of socialists, who were opposed to all forms of militarism on grounds of principle, and religious sects like the Society of Friends. The boys called up by the Act of 1911 were intensely hostile towards the system. Between July, 1911, when the compulsory training scheme began to operate, and March, 1915, there were no less than 34,000 prosecutions for refusals to attend drill. The unremitting socialist and pacifist agitation against the principle of compulsion in this period no doubt laid the basis for the organised opposition to Conscription which developed in 1916.

In February, 1915, the Australian Defence League, a bourgeois patriotic association, with which Hughes and Holman were intimately connected, urged the Commonwealth Government to "draft the men

of the nation for war and defence." By July the leaders of various Chambers of Commerce and Chambers of Manufacturers had joined in the clamour for Conscription. On the other side the adherents of No-Conscription became equally vocal. The I.W.W., which had already taken up an attitude of opposition to the war, seized upon the public utterances of the Conscriptionists to further its own cause. In Melbourne the Australian Peace Alliance was formed, which, in addition to opposition to Conscription, advocated peace by international arbitration. A No-Conscription Fellowship was also set up, consisting of young men of military age who pledged themselves to undergo imprisonment rather than serve in the war. All over the country the pros and cons of Conscription were being debated. In July, 1915, the Commonwealth Government passed a War Census Act, which the No-Conscriptionists rightly anticipated to be the first practical step towards compulsory overseas service. In the same month the Barrier Amalgamated Miners' Association passed a resolution against Conscription. From then onwards the Unions and Labor Leagues began to take a more active interest in developments. In November, Hughes, who had succeeded Andrew Fisher as Prime Minister, promised the British Government another 50,000 men from Australia. Questionnaires and War Census cards were distributed to seek out eligibles in the community. Unionists became alarmed at this turn of events and a deputation from the Brisbane Industrial Council waited on Hughes to elicit information concerning the Government's intentions. Hughes was very evasive in front of the deputation, which was compelled to leave without getting much satisfaction. The War Census Cards were distributed, but, acting on the advice of their unions, 180,000 workers failed to fill them in, which nullified the whole scheme.

Up to this stage the Anti-Conscriptionists hadn't succeeded in arousing much enthusiasm for their campaign. Their meetings were often poorly attended and were sometimes disrupted by gangs of drunken hooligans and small groups of misguided soldiers who were inspired and encouraged by the Conscriptionist press. But in January, 1916, Conscription became law in Britain and in consequence received more prominence in Australia. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council convened a special Conference in May to define the attitude of Victorian Trades Unions towards Conscription. It also debated a Resolution to send fraternal greetings to the workers in every country, imploring them to take action to force their governments to pronounce themselves openly on terms for peace. This important resolution, to which we will return later, was only defeated by the Chairman's casting vote. The Easter Conference of the N.S.W. Labor Party pledged itself to fight against Conscription, but simultaneously pledged itself

to support Hughes' effort to raise an additional 15,000 troops by voluntary enlistment. The Victorian Labor Party Conference and the Hobart Trade Union Conference also carried resolutions opposing Conscription. On all sides the Anti-Conscription movement began to gain ground.

Following on a big pro-Conscription meeting staged by the Universal Service League in the Sydney Town Hall, the No-Conscriptionists organised a mass rally in the Sydney Domain. A real united front was brought into existence, and this became the chief contributing factor to the ultimate success of the "NO" campaign. The following organisations were among those to send speakers to the Domain meeting: The I.W.W., the A.W.U., the Trades and Labor Council, the A.L.P., the Australian Freedom League and the Australian Socialist Party. Although it would seem that no formal pact or agreement was entered into the united front was none the less constituted in practice. These organisations were normally separated by wide differences of opinion concerning ultimate aims and the methods of struggle to be employed in bringing about their realisation, and yet they found it possible to combine temporarily in a common struggle against the specific menace of Conscription. The fact that such diverse trends as socialism, reformism, syndicalism, trade unionism and pacifism were able to unite so effectively on this issue is of the utmost significance for the whole labor movement. It disposes of the reformist fable that the united front is merely a latter day tactic of the communists for furthering their own ends. It proves beyond all doubt that differences on general questions of principle do not constitute an insurmountable barrier to common action on matters effecting the immediate interests of the working class. Each speaker from the Domain platform attacked Conscription from the viewpoint of his own particular organisation and the general effect was to greatly consolidate the "NO" forces. From then on the struggle became much sharper. The ruling class provoked larrikins and soldiers into attacking No-Conscription meetings. A biased and vicious censorship was operated against the anti-conscriptionist press, while civil and military police frequently raided socialist and trade union premises to seize documents and literature. This provocation led to the formation of a working class volunteer army at Broken Hill to combat Conscription and to defend the elementary rights of trade unions.

Hughes, who was still in London, had so far not committed himself definitely either way. On the one hand his long association with the Australian Defence League and his ardent support for the principle of compulsory military training in the past, led the Conscriptionists to believe that he would be wholeheartedly on their side in the struggle.

On the other hand, the No-Conscriptionists, recalling his unambiguous declaration of July, 1915, when the War Census Bill was under consideration, that, "In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of the country to fight against their will," were equally certain that Hughes would be in their camp. "Pros" and "Antis" alike eagerly awaited the return of the Prime Minister to bring matters to a climax. Hughes arrived back in July. The leading organ of the No-Conscriptionists, the "Worker," greeted his return with streamer headlines on the front page, "Welcome Back to the Cause of No-Conscription." But Hughes, who was even then determined upon Conscription, would make no public statement on the issue until he had consulted Caucus. He soon discovered that most of his colleagues in the Labor Party were aware of the anti-conscription sentiment among the rank and file and consequently were not prepared to risk their political scalps by supporting the legislation which he had in mind. For a time Hughes was in a quandary. It was conceivable that a Conscription Bill could be forced through the Lower House with the support of the Liberals. But there still remained the insuperable obstacle of a Labor controlled Senate with a No-Conscription majority. Ultimately he sought a way out by means of compromise and made a proposal that a Referendum be taken for or against Conscription. In the campaign Labor members were to be free to take whichever side they pleased. After the ballot all would return to the Caucus fold, shake hands and agree to accept the people's verdict. The object of this proposal was to avoid if possible a split in the Party which would jeopardise the life of the Government and bring to an abrupt conclusion Hughes' career as Prime Minister. It was a typical opportunist attempt to find a solution to a difficult problem. It avoided the need for an immediate showdown and thus won the support of all members of Caucus. Hughes at the time was apparently quite confident that his Conscription proposals would be carried at the Referendum.

On August 30 the first official announcement about the coming referendum was made. On September 1st Hughes attended a meeting of the Executive of the Victorian Labor Party. He harangued this body for three hours in a vain attempt to convert members to his point of view. Undismayed at their adverse decision, Hughes hastened to Sydney to convert the N.S.W. Executive. He met with no greater success. By 21 votes to 5 the meeting rejected his proposals that they should support Conscription. The Queensland Executive, without even hearing the Prime Minister, arrived at a similar decision to New South Wales and Victoria. Not only did the New South Wales Executive refuse to support Conscription, it went further and rejected

the idea that the politicians should be granted freedom of action on the matter. It demanded that they subordinate their will to that of the movement as a whole and come out openly and actively against Conscription. Hughes and a minority of his colleagues in the Federal Party ignored this edict and continued their activity in support of a "YES" vote. In N.S.W., Holman, who had replaced McGowan as leader of the Party and Premier of the State, was known to support Hughes. This attitude was shared by the majority of Holman's Cabinet Ministers. In Queensland, while there were many Conscriptionists in the Party, they were not in a majority and submitted to the Caucus decision to oppose the Referendum and Conscription.

On September 15 the New South Wales Executive expelled Hughes from the Party and withdrew the endorsement of Holman and three other members of the State Parliamentary party at the pending elections. The remaining politicians were circularised and all who did not agree to oppose Conscription were dealt with in like manner. Holman and a majority of the Cabinet in New South Wales revolted against this attempt to bring them under the discipline of the movement and were ultimately expelled. Durack became the leader of the Party in New South Wales and Holman and his supporters went over to the Liberals and helped form a National Government in October, 1916.

The announcement that a Referendum was to take place was the signal for renewed activity on the part of "Pros" and "Antis" alike. The former had all the advantages of solid financial backing, free access to public halls and the full support of the capitalist press. The latter were not only denied these privileges but were further handicapped by a class biased censorship and numerous other rectrictions imposed under the War Precautions Act. Nevertheless they struggled on until public sentiment began to change in their favour. Every means of intimidation and coercion against the anti-Conscription forces were resorted to by the Government. Hughes drafted a special War Precautions Act Regulation, whereby any intending voter at the Referendum could be interrogated as to whether he was subject to, and had obeyed, the proclamation calling up single men for home defence. The Regulation was only withdrawn on the eve of the ballot, after two labor members had resigned from the Ministry in protest against it. All Hughes' machinations were in vain. When the poll was taken on October 28, Conscription was rejected. The "NO" vote totalled 1,160,033 and the "YES" vote 1,087,557.

When all the circumstances are considered the defeat of Conscription was a tremendous victory for the democratic forces in Australia, and in the first place for the labor movement. The result

of the Referendum showed that whilst the workers and the middle classes were deceived about the real character of the war, and for the most part were not actively opposed to it, they were not so far carried away by chauvinism that they were prepared to sacrifice the last vestiges of democratic rights upon the altar of militarism.

The Conscription struggle had a profound effect upon the Labor Party. The developments in New South Wales have already been touched on. Holman and Co. were expelled. Similar happenings occurred in the Federal sphere and in other States, with the exception of Queensland, where there was no split. When the Federal Parliament reassembled after the defeat of the Referendum Hughes was admitted to the first meeting of the Labor Party Caucus. But it was only to hear a motion of no confidence moved against him. Refusing to listen to any debate Hughes stalked out of the meeting, calling on his followers in the Referendum campaign to do likewise. Twenty-four members followed Hughes out of the Party meeting, while forty remained to carry the censure motion. Hughes formed a new Cabinet from the ranks of the renegades which was kept in office by the Liberals for a short time. Subsequently, however, Hughes emulated Holman and went over openly into the anti-labor camp, coalescing with the Liberals to form a Nationalist Party.

The No-Conscription struggle provided rich experience which helped to further advance the revolutionary education of the Australian working class, although, like the experiences of the 1890 strike, its full lessons have been but slowly mastered. It showed that on the one hand the masses were becoming more and more opposed to having their interests subordinated to the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie, while on the other hand they were not yet sufficiently advanced to adopt the measures necessary to overcome this position. It showed up more clearly than ever the degree to which the leaders of the labor movement had become saturated with bourgeois ideology. The Conscriptionists like Hughes and Holman thoroughly exposed themselves and were driven from the movement. However, many of those who remained were no less opportunist, as their continued support for the imperialist war demonstrated. Some of them were subsequently unmasked in the years of the economic crisis, some of them continue the masquerade to this day.

The shortcoming of the Anti-Conscription campaign was that it remained a movement directed against only one aspect of the imperialist war and did not develop into a mass struggle against the war as a whole. Only a few members of the various socialist groups and the I.W.W. understood the connection between the struggle against Conscription and the struggle against the whole imperialist war. The

I.W.W. participated in the campaign not merely with the object of defeating Conscription but to arouse mass hostility to the reactionary war. Its gross sectarianism, plus the ideological and organisational weaknesses mentioned earlier, prevented the I.W.W. from realising this revolutionary aim. Consequently the struggle against Conscription never grew over into a real anti-war movement which might have brought the working class on to the correct revolutionary path. This was just one more penalty paid by the Australian labor movement for its isolation from scientific socialism.

Mention was made in an earlier section of the Peace resolution introduced at the Melbourne Trade Union Congress in 1916. The Perth Conference of the Labor Party carried a somewhat similar resolution in 1918. The sentiments expressed in these resolutions, calling on the workers to bring pressure to bear on their respective governments to restore peace, provides further evidence of the backwardness of socialism in the Australian labor movement at this period. The "Peace Slogan," Lenin once wrote, "is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a call to revolutionary action against the imperialist war. It can only have the effect of throwing dust in the eyes of the workers, instilling in them false hopes that a democratic peace can be obtained without first overthrowing the imperialist government. The only slogan for revolutionary socialists in an imperialist war is to transform it into a civil war, into a fight for socialism."[1] There is no evidence of any group in Australia having taken up and consistently advocated without any deviation such a policy. The I.W.W. and certain socialist sects may have come close to so doing at times, but for the reasons already stated, these bodies were not capable of rising to the necessary heights, demanded by history. They did, however, pave the way for the development of a real Leninist Party in the post-war period.

D. THE 1917 GENERAL STRIKE.

A second Conscription Referendum was held in 1917 and this time the "NO" majority increased to 166,588. But an event which overshadowed in importance the second Anti-Conscription campaign was the general strike which took place in New South Wales. Right on the heels of the first No-Conscription victory the New South Wales coalminers staged a very well organised strike for the eight hours bank to bank shift and an increase in wages. The success of the miners had a big influence on other unions and the I.W.W. propaganda for a general strike gained ground.

By this time discontent was becoming fairly widespread. War-time profiteering, high food prices, long hours and speed-up methods

1. Lenin on the "Peace Slogan"

in production, plus the refusal of the Arbitration Courts to increase wages sufficiently to offset the increased cost of living were the chief causes of industrial unrest. New South Wales, as the most highly industrialised State, was naturally the most effected. From the beginning of 1913 to the end of the first quarter of 1916, New South Wales experienced 729 industrial disputes, involving a loss of 2,078,934 working days and £1,072,905 in wages, whereas, in the rest of Australia there were but 308 disputes causing a loss of 656,096 days and £339,079 in wages.[1] Since the outbreak of war the cost of living had been steadily rising. By July, 1917, on the eve of the general strike, it was 30% or more above the pre-war level. The price of meat had gone up 62.5% and the prices of other foodstuffs and groceries 22.6%. The total combined average increase was 32.6%.[2]

Over the same period the living wage had only increased by 15.6% (In February, 1914, it was £2/8/- per week. In December, 1915, it was raised to £2/12/6, and in August, 1916, it was further increased to £2/15/6. It remained at this level until September, 1918, when it was raised again to £3.[3]) These figures indicate that the workers suffered a reduction of approximately 15% in real wages in the first three years of the war. But in actual fact their loss was even greater. If average weekly wages, and not the declared living wage, is taken as the basis for comparison, the reduction in real wages approximated 21%. (At the end of 1913 the average weekly wage in New South Wales was £2/15/9. By the end of 1916 it had risen to £3/1/11.[4]) This represents an increase of 11% and since the cost of living had increased by 32.6% the drop in real wages was 21.6%.

The reason for the percentage increase in the average weekly wage being less than that of the declared living wage was that many skilled and semi-skilled workers had their margins reduced. The Arbitration Court began in this period to apply the rule of the "Diminishing scale of increases in ratio above the minimum wage," i.e., as one judge expressed it, "In times like these the higher classes of worker can no longer claim, as a right, the same proportion above the minimum as prevailed before the war; all must bear their share, but those must bear most who are able to bear most."[5] In various judgments, where the living wage question was involved, the Court recognised that a tremendous increase in the price of necessities had taken place, but it steadfastly refused to increase wages by a proportionate amount. It held that the war had created an abnormal set of circumstances which

1. New South Wales Industrial Gazette, Vol. 10, p. 924.
2. Ibid, Vol. 12, p. 37.
3. New South Wales Government Year Book, 1939-40, p. 631.
4. Ibid, p. 639.
5. N.S.W. I.G. Vol. 12, p. 3.

justified a departure from the old principles of wage fixation based on the cost of living, and the workers would have to adapt themselves to a lower standard.

This view was first expressed by Mr. Justice Powers, and later approved by Mr. Justice Higgins. It is quoted in the Judgment of the N.S.W. Court of Industrial Arbitration in its Inquiry into the cost of living and the minimum wage:

> "I recognise that people cannot live in these days in reasonable comfort on the living wage prescribed, if they attempt to maintain the same regimen as in the days before the war and drought. If clothing goes up in price, ordinary people are more careful of what they possess and of new purchases. If butter goes up to a high price, other things are used in its place. If meat goes up in price less is used, etc. . . ."[1]

It was held out to the workers that this necessary adaptation to a lower living standard would be their contribution to the sacrifices which were expected from all sections in the community in the interests of winning the war. However logical these arguments may have seemed to the judges they failed to convince the workers. The latter saw employer after employer doubling his profits, company after company raising its dividend rates, and couldn't escape the feeling that the sacrifice was altogether too one sided. Figures like the following, which appeared from time to time in the financial columns of the daily press, added fresh fuel to the smouldering fire of working class discontent. Adelaide Stemship Company increased its profits from £45,000 in 1915 to £77,500 in 1917, and raised its dividend from 6% to 10%. Huddard Parker increased its dividend rate from 7 to 10%. Broken Hill South raised its dividend from 15% to 120%. Broken Hill North from 5% to 40%. Goldsborough Mort from 10% to 15% and Farmer & Co., also from 10% to 15%. It only needed a slight puff of wind to fan the glowing coals of working class anger into a white hot blaze. This was provided, it will be seen, by the attempt of the Railway Commissioners to introduce a speed up system into the Randwick Workshops in July, 1917. This became the immediate cause of the general strike which flared up in August.

An upward tendency in the strike movement was manifest in the period preceding the outbreak of war. This upswing began in 1912 and continued during the next four years. The year 1914 was marked by a particularly sharp rise in the number of strikes, the number of workers involved and days lost through stoppages. The following table gives a clear picture of these developments.[2]

1. N.S.W. I.G. Vol. 110, p. 920.
2. N.S.W. I.G. Vol. 9, p. 421, and Vol. 11, p. 550.

Year.	No. of New Disputes. Mining Indus.	Non-Mining Indus.	All Indus.	No. of Workers Involved. Mining	Non-Mining	All Indus.	Number of Days Lost. Mining	Non-Mining	All Indus.
1908	130	51	181	30,000	13,000	43,000	131,000	107,000	238,000
1909	85	43	128	36,000	7,000	43,000	1,970,000	47,000	2,017,000
1910	39	42	81	7,000	7,000	14,000	62,000	39,000	101,000
1911	41	30	71	11,000	9,000	20,000	247,000	110,000	357,000
1912	75	35	110	27,000	4,000	31,000	68,000	28,000	96,000
1913	91	69	160	29,000	13,000	42,000	238,000	129,000	367,000
1914	220	93	313	56,000	19,000	75,000	732,000	179,000	911,000
1915	225	89	314	66,000	28,000	94,000	310,000	160,000	470,000
1916	209	135	344	130,000	27,000	157,000	649,000	246,000	895,000

Commenting on these figures, the Industrial Gazette states:

"The number of dislocations reached its maximum in the year 1908. In each succeeding year the numbers decreased consistently until 1911. An upward tendency made itself apparent since the beginning of 1912. These fluctuations reflect fairly the industrial history of the State; its comparative prosperity from 1908 to 1910, temporarily checked by the general coal strike in 1909-10; the recovery of trade in recent years, and with it the corrollary to prosperity, renewed efforts of the workers to share in the betterment of conditions." [1]

From the foregoing it can be seen that the war broke out at a time when the workers were already beginning to struggle for an increased share in the prosperity of the country. The coal miners, it would seem, were in the vanguard. "The extraordinary increase in the number of dislocations in 1914 was contributed to in the main by the coal and shale mining industry. During 1914 a greater degree of unrest prevailed in the coal industry than for many years. In no year since the general strike in 1909-10 had so many working days been lost." [2]

The preceding table of disputes shows that this unrest persisted during 1915/16. In November, 1916, it culminated in the successful strike for the eight-hour bank to bank shift and a 20% wage increase. From the same table it can also be observed that the mining industry accounted for the greater proportion by far of all the disputes taking place. From July, 1907, to December, 1913, the mining industry actually accounted for two-thirds of the total number of dislocations, three-quarters of the total number of workers involved, and nearly nine-tenths of the total working days lost. [3] A large number of these stoppages were local in character and short in their duration. They

1. N.S.W. I.G. Vol. 4, p. 1083.
2. Ibid, Vol. 7, p. 554.
3. Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 556.

were caused mainly by disputes arising from the coal owners violation of local customs and working conditions.

A significant factor which emerged towards the end of 1916 was that unrest in non-mining industries was becoming far more widespread, as the following table reveals:

Year.	% of Total Disputes Taking Place in the Mining Industry.	% of Total Disputes Taking Place in Non-Mining Industry.
1914	67.7	29.7
1915	70.1	28.3
1916	57.3	39.2

Questions arising from wages and hours provided the chief causes of disputes, except in the case of the mining industry, where, as already mentioned, local customs and working conditions gave rise to most of the friction. But even in the coal mining industry the major dispute, which occurred in November, 1916, centred around wages and hours.

In the non-mining industries, as the cost of living mounted, so did the number of disputes concerning wages grow. In 1914 wages demands accounted for 21% of the total number of stoppages. In 1915 the percentage advanced to 29, and in 1916 to 39.6. In the latter year there was a particularly marked rise in the number of stoppages arising from demands for increased wages and special rates, as the following table shows:

	1915	1916
FOR WAGE INCREASES:		
Number of Disputes	17	33
Number of Workers Involved	7,958	5,856
Number of Days Lost	79,871	102,865
CLAIMS FOR SPECIAL RATES:		
Number of Disputes	8	15
Number of Workers Involved	1,754	1,358
Number of Days Lost	8,418	13,859

Such was the general picture of events leading up to the big strike which broke out in August, 1917. Since 1913 there had been fairly widespread criticism of the New South Wales Labor Government among the trade unions for its failure to implement any of the important planks in its platform. During the regime of this government, from the end of 1913 to November, 1916, the politicians and reformist union officials had great difficulty in restraining the workers from struggle and holding their militancy in check. A sidelight on their problems in this regard is revealed in a statement issued by W. Ainsworth, the Secretary of the Loco. Enginedrivers' Association, during the big strike. "For months now," he said, "my executive has

been faced with the spirit of unrest and discontent. Personally, I have endeavoured, and I have used my hours of recreation for the purpose of allaying the troubles that were so evident. . . ." When the Labor Party split on the Conscription issue and Holman was expelled, he linked up with Wade to form a Coalition Ministry. At the elections, early in 1917, the newly formed "National" Party was returned to office. It now became more difficult than ever for the reformists to hold the workers back.

In June, 1916, the Chief Commissioner of Railways and Tramways had introduced a time card system in the Randwick Workshops. The employees objected to this on the grounds that unreasonable speeding up of the labor process would follow. After a series of conferences between union officials and the Government the system was withdrawn. The Union claimed that the Government agreed that no further changes in the conditions of labor would be brought about during the war. On the other hand the Railway Commissioner claimed that the cards were only withdrawn temporarily until the system could be improved. In any case the cards made their reappearance in July, 1917, within a month or so of the return of the newly formed National Party. Holman, the leader of the party, was absent in England and Fuller was the Acting Premier.

On July 27 a mass meeting of members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who were effected by the card system, was held in Sydney Trades Hall and it was decided not to work while the system was in force. On July 28 the officials of the A.S.E. conveyed this decision to the Commissioner. On July 30, E. J. Kavanagh, Secretary of the Labor Council, announced that, in view of the position which might arise, a joint meeting would be held that night of the representatives of the various Railway Unions and the Executive of the Labor Council. On the afternoon of July 31, a joint deputation of Labor Council and Union representatives interviewed the Commissioner and were told that under no circumstances would the card system be withdrawn. On the same night the delegates from the fourteen different Railway Unions assembled at the Trades Hall to hear the report of the deputation. When informed of the uncompromising attitude of the Commissioner the meeting carried a resolution to deliver an ultimatum that unless the card system was withdrawn by Thursday, August 2, the whole of the unions concerned would stop work. On August 1, Kavanagh again saw the Commissioner and put before him the Unions' ultimatum. Later in the day the Commissioner replied by letter, reaffirming his refusal to withdraw the cards. On the same day Fuller made a statement in Parliament upholding the attitude of the Commissioner. He also claimed that

there was no intent on the part of the Commissioner or the Government to speed the men up and that if necessary a public inquiry would be held after the card system had been given a three months' trial.

It seems that among the unionists concerned there was some confusion about the real meaning of the ultimatum, although the terms of the motion itself were quite clear:

"That we re-affirm the resolution carried at Monday's meeting that an ultimatum be issued to the Government that unless the card system is withdrawn by next Thursday, August 2, the whole of the unions concerned will stop work."

The unions represented at the meeting which carried this resolution were: The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Australasian Society of Engineers, Boilermakers, Blacksmiths, Electrical Trades, Plumbers, Sheet Metal Workers, N.S.W. Govt. Tramways Employees' Union, Amalgamated Rail and Tramway Service Association, Moulders, Carpenters, Timber Workers, Ironworkers, Coachmakers, and Metal Polishers. The resolution didn't state whether all of these unions would stop work, or whether "the whole of the unions concerned" referred only to those directly effected by the card system. Apparently the latter was the case. It also appears that no steps were taken to inform the rank and file what they were expected to do in the event of the ultimatum being rejected. It seems, from what subsequently transpired, that it was left to them to act on their own initiative in carrying out the terms of the resolution. The union leaders knew full well, from the terms of the Commissioner's letter and from Fuller's statement in the House, that the card system would not be withdrawn. They should therefore have given clear instructions to their members about the stoppage which was scheduled for August 2. Instead of which the 1300 employees at Randwick went to work as usual at 7.30 and only ceased work at 9 a.m., when the members of the A.S.E. found that the card system was still in operation. About 3000 employees in the Eveleigh Railway Workshops also stopped work. Small groups of employees of various categories in other workshops and depots followed the lead of the Randwick and Eveleigh men. The total number of men usually employed in all these shops was 5700. By the end of the day 4673 were on strike, while 1027 remained at work. Figures released some time later showed that the total number of men who came out in all departments on August 2 was 5780, while the total number within the potential range of a general rail and tram strike was about 42,000.

Late in the afternoon of August 2, a hastily convened conference of delegates from the fourteen unions likely to be involved was held in the Sydney Trades Hall. This meeting failed to formulate any

concrete plans for handling the dispute. Hopes were still entertained that a last minute compromise could be arranged. In contrast to the indecision of the strike leaders was the prompt action of the Railway Commissioner who at once issued instructions reducing the speed of all trams and trains and curtailing services. This should have convinced the unions that the Government really meant business.

On August 3 a number of Enginedrivers, Cleaners, Moulders, Boilermakers and others were drawn into the dispute. Acting Premier Fuller heaped more fuel on the gathering blaze by a provocative public statement defining the Government's attitude. "There are in this State," he alleged, "a limited number of men who for the time being are in control of several trade unions and who have lost all sense of patriotism and responsibility and are deliberately contributing to the success of the enemies of civilisation by their actions." This pro-German bogey was used extensively by Fuller throughout the strike to discredit the leadership. But not only was suspicion cast upon the motives of the leaders, the intelligence of the rank and file was insulted. "Nine-tenths of the men do not know what the strike is really about," Fuller claimed, "they are being blindly led into this appalling conflict by a few dangerous leaders. Actually the reverse was the case. The workers, driven beyond endurance and smarting under many grievances, were spoiling for a fight and were pushing their leaders into action. The latter, reduced to flabbiness by long years of peaceful Arbitration Court practice, had no stomach for the battle. They constituted a greater menace to their own members than they did to the Government. Fuller again intimated that the Government was still prepared to hold a public inquiry after the card system had been in operation for three months. But there would be no compromise, the men would have to return to work on the Government's own terms. Making a bid to win public support for the Government and to turn middle class sentiment against the strikers, Fuller concluded his statement with the peroration:

"The time has come for the people of this State to take a stand against those extremists who have for a long time been deliberately conspiring against public interest and who have been responsible for the industrial ferment which has disgraced this State from the beginning of the war. There is yet time to avoid a bitter struggle. The door is still open to reinstatement of sensible men. This door will be closed to many if they persist in their present attitude."

Inherent in this statement is the threat to rid the Railway and Tramway services of "troublesome" elements who stood up for their rights, and to smash the existing unions, replacing them with subservient bodies of the company union type, if they failed to curb these

progressive elements. Later we shall see the lengths to which the Government was prepared to go in carrying out this threat.

E. J. Kavanagh, on the same day issued a statement on behalf of the Unions' Defence Committee. This document shows the light in which the leaders viewed the struggle and their own tasks. Like the title assumed by the Strike Committee, it reveals how far the minds of the people in control were dominated by the paralysing notions of "defensive strategy" and, concomitant with it, compromising tactics.

"The Defence Committee has been appointed with the object of carrying on negotiations for a settlement of the dispute." Such was the introduction to the Manifesto. The agreed basis for a settlement, it continued, was:

1. The Railway Commissioners to revert to the position as it existed on June 1.
2. The Government to grant a Royal Commission to enquire into the subject matters of the trouble.
3. That the men return to work upon the granting of this.

Kavanagh concluded his statement on behalf of the Committee with expressions of fear of "what might eventuate if a speedy settlement was not effected. . . . There was a possibility of the trouble extending throughout the whole rail and tram service. . . . Private employers must eventually be effected to a degree. . . . He had never known a body of men so determined and unanimous, etc." Any hopes which the strike leaders entertained that the Governmet would be moved to compromise by such a "terrifying" prospect were without foundation. Fuller's statement should have made it clear that only a very real and not a sham fight would bring success to the strikers. The leaders from the beginning had no intention of mobilising the workers for such a struggle, they hastened to assure the Government and the public at large that there was "no extreme socialism behind the dispute."

On August 5, with several of their members already on strike, the Loco. Enginedrivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association and the Amalgamated Rail and Tram Service Association met and decided officially to cease work. On August 6, Kavanagh, in the name of the Defence Committee, declared all coal in the hands of the Railway Commissioner "black," and stated that the decision of the Loco. men and the A.R.T.S.A. meant that all rail and tram services would cease at midnight. But the weaknesses of craft and dual unionism resulted in a number of unionists not covered by these organisations remaining at work. Rail and tram traffic was severely crippled but not completely paralysed. Emergency measures were adopted by the Commissioner and the Government to operate a skeleton service. Forty

suburban trains came into Central and thirty-four went out, as against 660 normally. Sixty trams, each with an escort of two policemen, operated in Sydney to take people home from work. The Railway Commissioner issued a further statement threatening victimisation to those who remained out on strike. The Government also made another pronouncement, claiming that, "We are now dealing with what is in effect a rebellion against the orderly government of the country. . . . The Government makes a final appeal and gives every employee a chance to return to work by Friday, August 10. At the end of three months an enquiry will be held into the card system. After Friday none will go back on the old status. Strikers will be punished and loyalists will be rewarded. Volunteers will be enrolled." By this time the hold up was beginning to affect coal miners, metal workers, carters and drivers and other sections of the working class.

On August 7, the fifth day of the strike, eighteen unions and some 30,000 workers were already involved. Of the wages staff in the employment of the Railway Commissioners, 17,348, or 61% were on strike, while 10,819, or 39% were still at work. The confusion which marked the calling of the strike in the first place had not yet been overcome. Nor was it at any time cleared up during the course of the stoppage. There was a lack of unity and understanding among the craft unions involved. Where a clear call to strike action was given few unionists disobeyed their organisation. The number of such remaining at work would have been even fewer had more vigorous steps been taken by the leadership to clearly explain the issues involved. Fuller availed himself of this situation and sought to render the confusion more confounded. He accused certain union executives of violating the rules of their organisation by ordering a strike without first conducting a secret ballot. "The men's hearts are not in the fight," he alleged, "they just don't like being called scabs, but the Government would protect every loyalist." Since the strike leadership failed to effectively combat this Government propaganda it resulted in a minority of the more backward elements remaining at work. Sufficient, it proved, to form a nucleus around which volunteer labor could be organised to break the strike.

On August 8 the "Case of the Loco. Enginedrivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Association" was published by the Secretary. This document, among other things, reveals how ill-founded were the Government's charges that the union leaders were bent upon fomenting "bloody revolution." The highly respectable, staid and law-abiding reformist leader of the Locomen's Association literally bristles with indignation as he hotly refutes the implication of Fuller that he and

his colleagues are not staunch supporters and loyal defenders of the capitalist regime. "I would like to say deliberately," he says, "that the statement so monotonously repeated for specific purposes, that our fight is against the Government as a Government, is entirely wrong. We merely encounter the Government on industrial ground. We are disputing with them and are prepared to treat with them as employers of labor. We clearly recognise that they control the general destinies of the country, and to assert that we are actuated by a revolutionary spirit or that we desire to usurp the functions of the Government is positively absurd. . . .

"For months my Executive has been faced with the spirit of unrest and discontent. Personally, I have used my hours of recreation for the purpose of allaying the troubles which were so evident." The statement then goes on to list some of the major causes of discontent among drivers, firemen and cleaners, including the "Stand-back" principle, under which men ordered to report for work at 4 a.m. may be told to stand-back to 6 a.m. before starting, without being paid for waiting time; "Broken-shifts," again without any payment for the time men are kept waiting around in country depots; "Short time," some men being given only nine or ten shifts per fortnight; and "Discipline," which was far too harsh; men could be dismissed with no right of appeal. Locomen had been trying for years to have these grievances rectified, their secretary stated, but the Commissioner had consistently turned a deaf ear to their complaints. This left them no option other than to join in the strike. A concluding and most significant phrase refers to the card system as "A spark that fell into a cauldron of seething discontent and industrial impatience."

The most important event on this day, Wednesday, August 8, was the deputation to Cabinet of representatives of the Colliery Employees' Federation, Coal Lumpers, Waterside Workers, Trolley and Draymen, Seamen's Union, Meat Industry, Gas Workers and the Australian Workers' Union. The spokesman for the deputation, A. C. Willis, told the Acting Premier that, "Matters have reached a stage where it is thought by those in charge of the dispute that other unions should be called on to declare their attitude. We therefore met them today. We quite realise the gravity of the situation and are anxious to do something to bring the dispute to a satisfactory conclusion. We have no wish to discuss the merits of the dispute. Since it is now effecting others we think even at this eleventh hour we can put a proposition that will help you out of the difficulty. We suggest as a basis for settlement that:

1. The State Government ask Edmunds J. to act as arbitrator and to enquire into the whole grievance.

2. In the meantime the Card System to be discontinued.
3. That on Edmunds J. being appointed all employees return to work, or alternatively the enquiry be held while the men are still out. The strike in the meantime to be no further extended.

"We feel our responsibility as much as you do and if an honourable understanding can be reached even now, what threatens to be a great national calamity can be averted. You know as well as we do that unless something is done the mining and other unions will be involved in a few days. We want to avoid that. That is the reason we are here tonight. We are not here to threaten at all."

Herein we are given another example of how far the minds of labor leaders at the time were dominated by bourgeois philosophy. The idea of a general strike was that it constituted a "great national calamity," ranking with droughts, floods, bushfires and the blow-fly pest. Far from having any notions of extending the strike and converting it into a political struggle, the union leaders were most anxious to limit its scope and confine it within narrow economic bounds. The Government and not the union leaders were responsible for the manner in which the dispute spread. Had they wished they could quite easily have terminated the conflict at this stage. But having once embarked upon the struggle it seems that the Government was determined to "teach the unions a lesson they'd never forget." After no more than ten minutes private discussion with Cabinet, Fuller curtly informed the deputation that there was "nothing doing" and that the strikers had better return to work as quickly as possible.

On August 9 the ranks of the strikers increased to 45,000, when coal miners, waterside workers and more trolley and draymen ceased work. But the Railway Commissioner was able to go on extending his emergency service. Seventy-four trains ran into the metropolitan area on this day, including the Melbourne express and several important mail trains. Eight goods trains also left Sydney for various country destinations. There was also a progressive expansion of the City tram service throughout the day. At 8 a.m. there were 84 trams on the road. By 3 p.m. the number had increased to 175, or 56% of the normal service.

An important statement was issued by Claude Thompson, Secretary of the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association, setting out the reasons why this organisation had thrown in its lot with the strikers.

"The present industrial upheaval," he declared, "which occurred in connection with the introduction of the card system has brought under public notice other grievances of a serious character. It is true that the initial source of the trouble was the card system, but the

whole trouble has wider foundations. It is the outcome of a whole series of pin-pricking and goading on the part of the Railway Commissioners. Had the dispute been confined to the card system there would have been no general cessation of work of A.R.T.S.A. members, except those in railway and tramway workshops. But while this dispute was proceeding the doors of the Arbitration Court were banged in the face of this union. For upwards of three years our members have been groaning under an oppressive system. After long years of waiting we got an Award from the Court which was not satisfactory. The Association tried to appeal but was thrown out of Court because some members were on strike. On the same day the Commissioner was allowed to appeal. The Court applied the "Margin and Textile Judgement" (apparently the law of diminishing rates above the minimum. E.W.C.) and practically all men in per. way and interlocking sections had their wages reduced automatically. When this was known the indignation of members reached boiling point and it became impossible to restrain it. There were incessant demands for throwing into the melting pot our grievances with those endured by other railwaymen. The Amalgamated men will not return to work until the recent Award is withdrawn and our grievances rectified. . . ."

The facts set out in this statement, taken in conjunction with those contained in the Locomen's Manifesto, create the impression that guerilla warfare between the Railway Commissioner and the Unions had been raging for some time. A climax was pending and the card system served as an excuse for both sides to seek a final showdown. The attitude of the Commissioner and the Government throughout seems to have been deliberately provocative. They evidently felt sure of their ground and were confident in their power to inflict a decisive defeat upon the unions. In all probability, however, they underestimated the great depth of the general discontent prevailing and didn't foresee the extent to which the railway strike would find support in outside undertakings. But once having cast down the gauntlet there was no alternative but to go through with the fight to the bitter end. The unions on their part, having accepted the challenge, found themselves compelled to do likewise.

The Defence Committee issued a statement in reply to Fuller's threat to enrol volunteer labourers. It further exposed the utter bankruptcy of reformist officialdom.

"The Defence Committee has carefully considered Mr. Fuller's proclamation," it declared. "It is a mixture of bluff, mis-statement and intimidation. The Commissioner cannot fill the places of 20,000 highly skilled workmen now on strike. Any attempt to introduce scab labour will result in disastrous injury to highly-priced machinery.

"The Government has no power to override the rights already conferred on railwaymen and tramwaymen, which are specifically protected by Act of Parliament and Judgments of the Arbitration Court.

"The threat that the Government will fill the places of all men on strike by Friday next is simply an idle boast on the part of an anti-Labor government anxious to bolster up a dying fight.

"Since the men came out on strike against the card system, other unions have become involved, and the associated unions, comprising the Defence Committee, have resolved none shall return to work until all grievances have been ventilated by a tribunal appointed for the purpose. The difficulty is not to prevent men from going in but to prevent men from coming out on strike in sympathy with the men already out. The Committee has no wish to call other unions out unless necessary."

This statement shows how completely lacking were the strike leaders in any real working class understanding. It thoroughly exposes their inability to size up a situation correctly and to give the right lead. It was ridiculous to entertain the idea that the Government was bluffing when Fuller had so curtly dismissed the combined unions offer of conciliation, and was already in communication with country centres to recruit volunteers. Too much stress was laid on the Commissioner's presumed inability to fill the places of 20,000 skilled men. More especially in view of the skeleton train and tram services which were even then in operation.

As to the effects of possible losses arising from unskilful manipulation of costly machinery by volunteer labourers, an elementary knowledge of the class struggle would have made it clear to the leaders that the employing class and their Government would regard such losses as a cheap price to pay for a victory which might conceivably lead to the complete smashing of trade unionism.

This document also reveals the naive faith in bourgeois legality and reliance upon capitalist institutions which characterises the reformists and arises from their basic misunderstanding of the role and functions of the State. "The Government has no power to override rights. . . ." "These are protected by Act of Parliament, etc." The strike leaders were soon to be given an object lesson in the "powers" of a capitalist government, they were soon to be shown in practice just how little protection is afforded by mere Acts of Parliament, unless the workers are strong enough and sufficiently determined to defend their rights. They were soon to learn in a concrete fashion just how little respect the bourgeoisie has for its own laws when it considers its own class privileges are at stake.

All the evidence pointed to the fact that the Government was in deadly earnest and was not indulging in any "idle boast" nor seeking

to "bolster up a dying fight." It was slowly but surely gathering the initiative into its own hands and preparing to deliver a crushing blow against unionism in general and against the railway and tramway unions in particular. Had the strike leaders possessed an atom of understanding of the laws of class struggle they would have been able to interpret matters correctly. Instead of discouraging other unions from coming out, they would have planned the extension of the conflict. They would have taken steps to see that this took place in an organised fashion, instead of being allowed to come about spontaneously. Instead of speculating on the Commissioner's difficulties in recruiting sufficient volunteer labour, they would have organised a vigorous campaign to prevent this happening. But the leaders were lacking in scientific theory. Reformism and not Scientific Socialism dominated the movement and the workers had to learn the hard way, through the school of bitter experience.

August 10, "Black Friday," the day of expiry of the Government's ultimatum, dawned, but ranks of the strikers remained solid. The unions were notified that as from Monday, August 13, all rail and tram employees then on strike would be dismissed from the service and would forfeit all superannuation and other rights. Application would be made to the Court to cancel all Railway and Tramway Awards and to deregister the unions. The next day the Defence Committee published a Manifesto, a dreary and most uninspiring document, detailing alleged examples of inefficiency and incompetency in the management of the railways. The central point in the Manifesto was the demand for a Royal Commission to investigate these charges. "The card system," it was stated, "may appear to be a small matter, but in reality it is only the culminating point in a condition of general discontent—the last straw which broke the camel's back. The men do not trust the card system because they know the inner workings of the Railway Department, the corruption, mismanagement and incompetence that exists. . . ."

This seems to have been the only attempt, and even then it was only half-hearted, to extend the issue of the strike beyond the card system. Little further mention was made of the grievances of the Locomen and the members of the A.R.T.S. Association. It is to be assumed that the strategy of the Strike Committee now was to lump all these questions together, attribute the lot to the unsatisfactory conditions of management said to exist in the Railway and Tramway Services, and to plump for a Royal Commission to clear everything up. This strategy, if such it can be called, only played right into the hand of the Government, which from the beginning had indicated its willingness to grant a Commission of Inquiry after three months' operation of the card system. From now on the issue became largely a matter

of whether the Commission would be appointed at once, while the men were still out and whether it would deal only with the card system or also cover the other matters raised by the unions concerned. The Government remained adamant in its demand that the men return to work under the card system for three months when the promised Inquiry would take place. The other questions it held to be extraneous to the dispute and matters to be dealt with by the Courts, Thus the strategy of he Strike Committee instead of broadening the basis of the struggle only assisted the Government to further narrow it down. A Charter of Demands, embodying the grievances of all workers involved, should have been drawn up and made the fighting programme of the broad mass movement which was developing. From the facts set out in previous pages it is obvious that the demand for all round wage increases was the most vital economic issue involved. The political level of the struggle could have been raised by turning the Government's propaganda back against it. By pointing out that the Governments, State and Federal, and not the Unions, were actually betraying the nation. That these Governments were engaged in an unjust reactionary war, that they were attacking the people's liberties, sheltering the war profiteers and attempting to smash trade unionism—the backbone of Australian democracy, etc. In this way the Strike Committee could have wrested the initiative from the hands of Fuller and Co. and waged an offensive and not merely a defensive struggle. Marx once stated that the defensive is the death of an armed uprising. It can with equal truth be described as the defeat of a general strike.

The Sunday papers on August 12 carried this full page advertisement of the Government:

TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

The enemies of Britain and her Allies have succeeded in plunging Australia into a general strike.

For the time being they have crippled our country's efforts to assist in the Great War. At the back of the strike lurk the I.W.W. and the exponents of direct action. Without realising it many Trade Unions have become the tools of Disloyalists and Revolutionaries.

A great conspiracy has been fomenting for the past two years to prevent Australia rendering further assistance to Great Britain and her Allies. Every striker is playing a game for Disloyalists. Every striker is singing from day to day the hymns of the I.W.W. and marching to their music. *The Government is not against the unions.* All unionists who volunteer for work will be accepted as Unionists, and will be enrolled as members of the New Unions, registered under the Trades Union Act.

WHO IS FOR AUSTRALIA AND THE ALLIES?

While in reality doing its utmost to confine the strike to the narrow economic issue which provoked it, in public pronouncements of this kind the Government sought to exaggerate its aims and to depict it as a major political struggle. None of the charges brought against the strikers in this proclamation could of course be substantiated. It was part of the Government's own strategy to isolate the strikers and to mobilise public opinion behind its own measures by playing on the patriotic sentiments of the petty bourgeoisie.

On August 13 and 14, Ship Painters and Dockers, Marine Stewards and Engineers and Boilermakers at Mort's Dock and Cockatoo threw in their lot with the strikers. The Railway Commissioner implemented his mass dismissal threat and the Government put through regulations acquiring the power to commandeer all private cars and motor vehicles for the duration of the strike.

The Railway Commissioner released a statement claiming that on August 2, the total staff employed in the Railway and Tramway Services, excluding those on active service abroad, was 39,945. Of this staff, he maintained, 19,322 remained loyal. Since August 2, 300 strikers had returned to duty and 800 men had been taken on in place of strikers. These figures do not tally with those given out on August 7, which showed 17,348 on strike and 10,819 still at work, or a total of 28,167. But these figures related only to the wages staff, therefore, is to be presumed that the later statistics included salaried officers. If we deduct the figure 28,167, given on August 7 as the total wages staff, from the 39,945 shown on August 14, as the total staff, we see that the number of salaried officers was 11,778. If we deduct this number from the 19,322 said to have remained loyal, we see that 7,544 members of the wages staff must have defied their unions' strike decision, while a further 300 returned to work later. This analysis shows that the strike was only 69% effective among the wages staff or 51% effective if the whole of the services be considered. This shows how little justification there was for the complacency and optimism of the Strike Committee, who thought they had only to sit back and wait for the Commissioner and the Government to settle on their terms.

Further proof, if any were needed, of the Government's serious intentions, was forthcoming when a camp was opened at the Sydney Cricket Ground to receive the first batch of volunteer laborers. Present day trade unionists should ponder well on this significant extract from an official report: "Volunteers were looked for in the country because the bona-fides of country residents would present less difficulty than those of city residents, seeing that the labor for the city had for long past been searchingly organised for trade union pur-

poses." This fact alone should stir the trade unions into doing far more to extend their influence in the countryside.

The Loyalist Camp at the Cricket Ground was the first and largest of a whole series to be opened up by the Government and the employers. Subsidiary camps were set up at Taronga Park, the Newcastle Sailors' Home, Dawes' Point Wharf, Mortlake Gasworks, and on the coalfields. These camps were all equipped on military lines with stores from Naval and Military Ordnance Depots. The maximum number of free laborers mobilised was about 7000. This peak was reached on September 26. The maximum number of men on strike was 68,000, on September 5. The ratio of volunteers to strikers was therefore a fraction over one in ten. And this was sufficient, it proved, to break the back of the strike. Of course if we add the 19,000 salaried officers who remained "loyal" to the Commissioner, we see that the actual strike breaking corps was an even more formidable force. The ratio being reduced to approximately 1:2½.

The upkeep of such a large body of strike-breakers cost the taxpayers of N.S.W. quite a considerable sum. The cost of recruiting loyalists and conveying them to the concentration camps (the term was coined by the Government itself) and returning them to their homes was £24,485, or £3/5/10 per head. The cost of administration of the camps was £41,908. The cost per man per week at the Cricket Ground was £1/15/9, or 5/1 per day. (The Army scale of victualling a soldier in camp today provides for an outlay of approximately 1/6½ per day.) According to the official report, "no scale of victualling was laid down for the camps, but instructions were given that the loyalists should be most liberally treated in respect of the food provided. It being recognised that generous treatment in this regard would be an important factor in making the camps popular with the men and that money judiciously spent in the purchase, preparation and serving of food was money well spent." Hot meat, bread, butter, jam and tea were served three times a day. Vegetables were served twice and soups and puddings added to the menu occasionally through the week. The volunteers were treated to free films, vaudeville shows, etc., and banks and post offices were set up in the camps for their convenience. Medical arrangements were under the control of Major George Reed, assisted by students from the University medical school. Conjunctivitis, due to the straw in the bed tickings, gave them most work, except in the case of the Taronga Park Camp, where venereal disease was rife. Thanks to the Government Regulation taking over all motor vehicles, the Camp Commandant had a large fleet of lorries and taxies at his disposal to convey his charges, under heavy police escort to and from work. The Camp Commandant at the Cricket Ground was the Hon. A. K. Trethowan, President of the Farmers' and

Settlers' Association, while Colonel Alfred Spain, of the Graziers' Association was in charge at Taronga Park.

Feeling against the "loyalists" ran high. On September 6, one of them was shot through the hand while unloading a lighter at Dawes Point. The shot was fired from the window of a house overlooking the wharf and the marksman was able to retire undetected. This incident raised the question of where the "loyalists" stood in relation to the Workmen's Compensation Act. The Government requested the Underwriters' Association to quote a premium rate. The rate submitted was 1/- per week per man, with a disaster limit of £2000. This was "regarded as high in comparison with the normal rates current, but having regard to the special risk of violence to which loyal workers were exposed daily while travelling to and from work, it was deemed desirable to accept the offer."

On August 14 the first arrest of a union official in connection with the strike took place. W. Daly, Vice-President of the Seamen's Union, was charged with conspiracy to instigate an unlawful strike of seamen. The following day the Defence Committee offered to conduct a secret ballot to see whether their terms or those of the Government were acceptable to the men. The offer was curtly dismissed by Fuller.

It was at this stage that the Federal Government intervened. Regulations were introduced under the War Precautions Act making it an offence to interfere with interstate or overseas shipping traffic and setting up National Service Bureaux to organise volunteer labor in the event of the seamen joining the strikers.

On August 15 a deputation of "leading citizens" offered the Government the full assistance of the "great employers' organisations" to break the strike. The Government thankfully accepted this offer and proposed that a sub-committee be set up to organise emergency transport. A Committee, comprising A. McNeil of Garretts Ltd., and Boyd Edkins, motor transport experts, and Frank Cridland, James McMahon and A. E. Rudder, horse transport experts, was established. Regulations taking over horse-drawn as well as motor vehicles were adopted. By this decree the teams and plant of 56 master carriers were taken over. The owners, of course, being guaranteed liberal indemnity in case of loss or damage. This proved to be a cardinal factor in the ultimate defeat of the strike, for had there been any breakdown in the transport of foodstuffs the Government might have been compelled to capitulate. Incidentally, as we shall see later, these emergency regulations were quite illegal and outside the scope of the Government's Constitutional powers.

On August 16 Fuller made another appeal to the strikers to return on the Government's terms. The next day Kavanagh replied,

stating that the men were as solid as ever. "It must be borne in mind," Kavanagh stated, "that even if the Commissioner were able to get the running staff into the same order as obtained prior to the dispute, this would in no way affect the issue. The men who really hold the trump card are the tradesmen and they are acting loyally towards their unions." This was a gross underestimation of the serious menace arising from volunteer labor. The running staff, and not the tradesmen, really occupied the key position. If the Commissioner could keep a skeleton service operating, repairs and renewals could wait until the strikers were starved into submission. Instead of complacently accepting the position, and whistling in the dark to keep up their spirits, the Committee should have redoubled its efforts to pull the remaining members of the running staff out on strike. Without this victory was impossible.

On August 17, Kavanagh, Willis and Thompson were arrested and charged with conspiracy. The iniative was passing more and more rapidly into the hands of the Government. On the same day Bills were rushed through Parliament releasing Gas and Electricity Undertakings of their Statutory obligations to maintain supplies to the public. Another measure empowered the Government to employ inexperienced labor in coal mines. Fuller gave the miners until August 23 to return to work, otherwise loyalists would be put in their places.

On August 20 the meat-workers joined the strike and again the employers aided the Government to meet the emergency. A Committee of Master Butchers was set up which mobilised a team of amateurs to carry on slaughtering. On the same day the Federal Government took drastic action by empowering the Navy to take over all coal in the Commonwealth and to distribute supplies for industrial and other purposes. The Defence Committee showed the first open signs of weakness and took the first steps towards capitulation. It proposed to order a resumption if the Government would agree to modify the card system and guarantee there would be no victimisation. The offer was rejected and the Government again indicated that it would honour in full its promises to the "loyalists."

On August 21 the Defence Committee sought to retrieve its "blunder" of the previous day. It issued a statement denying that it was prepared to accept the card system and called on all unionists to remain solid. Later, Fuller indicated that the Cabinet had reviewed the position and had re-endorsed his terms, i.e., that then men return to work at once under the card system, pending an inquiry after three months. The Government would make no pledges about victimisation. Loyalists would be protected. The Defence Committee, in reply, said that "The Government was demanding the complete humiliation of

organised labor." While expressing its "willingness to effect an equitable settlement," the Committee was "determined to continue the struggle until justice was conceded." This last sentence was no more than an empty phrase, since the Committee was not taking any effective steps to ensure victory. Having routed the Committee from its earlier defensive position and started it on the retreat, Fuller hastened to press home the advantage. "So far as the original cause of the dispute—the card system—is concerned, this could be settled tomorrow," he declared. "The main difficulty now is the Government's pledge to the loyalists. This will be honoured in full."

Feeling well on top of the situation by August 24, Fuller announced that the Government would not negotiate further with the Strike Committee, which from now on would be regarded as an illegal organisation. The Committee responded with a Manifesto, which gave further proof of the spineless character of the leadership. The shameful defensive strategy unfolded itself a stage further on the way towards total submission. "The Committee has met and adjourned indefinitely," the Manifesto opened up. A cowardly step, obviously designed to escape the penalties attached to being associated with an illegal body. "We are willing at any moment to resume work, and will agree to any other method of recording time, free from the degrading features of the Taylor system. . . . This is not a dispute engineered by a few leaders, but a free and spontaneous protest by vast bodies of men against unjust and degrading conditions. About 100,000 workers are affected by this unhappy dispute. Against this unparalleled array the Railway Commissioner and associated employers have been able to secure a couple of thousand so-called "volunteers."

"This struggle was thrust upon us. We are acting only in self-defence. We are striving to prevent the ruthless breaking down of that honourable status of labor for which Australia is celebrated all over the world. And we are now ready as we have been all along to meet the Chief Commissioner fairly in the matter, to resume work under neutral conditions and to pledge ourselves faithfully to abide by the decision of an independent tribunal on the system in dispute."

Had the Government not already been in possession of ample evidence of the weakness in the ranks of the strike leadership, this Manifesto would have supplied it. It is almost grovelling in its tone, and downright stupid in its appeal to the better nature of the Cabinet and the Commissioner's sense of fair play. A grossly exaggerated importance is attached to the number of men on strike, and a wicked attempt made to belittle the significance of the strike breaking force at the Government's command. The hundreds of thousands of strikers were immobilised due to poor organisation, lack of discipline and bad leadership, whereas, the few thousand volunteers constituted

a powerful force, because they were well organised and distributed under the disciplined control of a Government which was carrying out a planned offensive against the Unions.

On August 27 Fuller published a statement purporting to outline the political aspects of the strike. "Those who are at all impressed by the arguments of the strike leaders," he said, "must accept the Government's assurance that the card system is only a pretext for a general industrial upheaval. The Government has in its possession ample evidence that long before the cards were introduced a scheme was secretly originated aiming at the holding up of the whole of Australia by means of a general strike. The scheme for a general hold-up came off some months before the secret strike committee was ready. This general strike was organised to take place at a later date, but the men responsible for it could not control the Red Rag element and all that has happened is that the strike took place months before it was originally intended. This is why the Government says there can be no compromise in a dispute of this kind.

"Once the strike is used for other than industrial purposes, once it is used to take government control out of the hands of Parliament, a Government can only face the position squarely, and say that, whatever the consequences may be, a strike of this nature must be fought to a finish."

Of course there was no evidence to substantiate these wild charges. The Government was unable to produce a single document, or a solitary concrete fact to bolster up its ridiculous allegations. Certainly the I.W.W. had carried on propaganda for a general strike, and this propaganda had been meeting with more and more response in the ranks of organised labor. But the sectarianism of the I.W.W. prevented it from establishing any durable connections with the mass movement. In addition to which it was dissolved by Hughes in 1916. Among the most thankful people in the community at this action were the law-abiding craft union officials who dominated the Defence Committee. It is a far step from I.W.W. propaganda for a general strike to "gigantic conspiracies," "secret plans" and "underground strike committees." A gulf which even the Fuller Government made no serious attempt to bridge. So confident were the strike leaders in their own lilywhite purity that they replied to Fuller, stating that if he could prove his charges of I.W.W. influences in the dispute they were prepared to order an immediate resumption and would be most thankful to him for having shown them the error of their ways.

The morale of the strikers remained at a high level. Every day brought forth new examples of solidarity. Even the block boys, employed by the City Council, objected to pursuing their usual calling while horses driven by free laborers remained on the streets, and,

in defiance of their own union officials, struck work.

On August 31, R. D. Meagher, Lord Mayor of Sydney, offered his services as mediator between the Defence Committee and the Government. His attempts broke down. The Committee was now prepared to return under the card system if guarantees were forthcoming that there would be no victimisation and Inquiry would be held into other matters in dispute. The Government was bent upon forcing complete and unconditional surrender.

While the Lord Mayor was engaged in fruitless negotiations with the Government a mass meeting of 5000 strikers was held in the Town Hall, which expressed strong disapproval of the Government's attitude and reaffirmed the intention of the men to continue their resistance. Mr. Corcoran, of the Boilermakers' Union, who moved the main resolution, expressed the "tailism" so typical of reformist craft union officials. He repudiated the suggestion that the strikers were misled by paid agitators, but went on to point out that "The leaders did not take the initiative, the men in the workshops did so and forced their officers to act. The strike leaders were only doing as they had been told, etc."

All of which, unfortunately, was only too true. Spontaneity, which dominated the movement in the 'nineties, had not yet been overcome. While it reigned supreme a heavy toll was levied on the movement as a whole.

August 31 also saw the first open breach appear in the ranks of the unions. The Australian Workers' Union broke the united front of labor when Bodkin, the Secretary of the Railway Workers' Branch, instructed his members in the Irrigation Area that they were to handle all goods, irrespective of whether they had been declared "black" or not.

Fuller informed Mr. R. D. Meagher, on September 3, that he was wasting his time drafting new terms for a settlement, since the only ones the Government would consider were its own. In reply to this the Defence Committee issued a statement as follows:

"After careful consideration of the latest declaration of the State Cabinet, the Committee regrets that it now becomes necessary to make it known to the Government and the general public that we are resolved to carry on the fight to the bitter end. We have declared our intention of asking other unions, including the A.W.U., not to handle anything which has previously been handled by "black" labor."

Again empty words, mere phrases without any real meaning, since the Defence Committee took no steps whatsoever to prepare for a "fight to the bitter end." If this meant anything at all it meant calling for an extension of the strike, and such was the temper of the workers and the morale of the strikers, that such a call would

have aroused enthusiastic response. Even A.W.U. members would have answered it over the heads of their chicken-hearted leaders. And even at this late stage such action could have won back the initiative for the strikers and possibly turned the tide in their favor. Instead of which the Committee winds up on a note discouraging other workers from joining the struggle. "The policy of the Strike Committee," it reads, "in regard to all work on goods declared "black" remains unaltered. But extensions of the dispute are likely to occur owing to the great difficulty of holding men engaged in other industries at work."

These fears of the Strike Committee were soon confirmed. That very day employees at George Hudson's timber yards came out, as did the workers at the Mortlake Gas Works. But so highly organised were the Government's "emergency services" by this time that within an hour the places of the latter were filled by 250 "loyalists."

On September 6 the Industrial Commission took a hand and conferred for two days with the Defence Committee to get them to accept the Government's terms of surrender. After all the brave talk about waging a "fight to the bitter end," the Defence Committee decided to accept the Government's humiliating conditions on behalf of the unions concerned in the railway strike. These were:—

1. The card system as existing on August 1, to be continued. At the end of three months a Royal Commission to be held.

2. The men to be given the opportunity to initial their own cards each day.

3. The Unions to submit full lists of their grievances to a Special Commissioner for Conciliation to be appointed under the 1912 Act.

4. Such grievances as fall within the jurisdiction of the Court shall be referred to the Court at once.

5. Such as do not, will be referred by the Commissioner to the Cabinet, which will amend the Act to give the Court jurisdiction over industrial, but not administrative matters.

6. Railway Commissioner to have discretion in filling vacancies, but in making appointments prior consideration to be given to applicants who were employed before August 1.

7. It is mutually understood that work shall be resumed without resentment and employment offered without vindictiveness.

When these terms were put before mass meetings of railway workers on September 10, there was a tremendous outcry. Great hostility towards the Union leaders and the Defence Committee was expressed. Especially was there opposition to any thought of going back until the unions on strike in other industries had been given opportunity of settling their affairs with employers. A suggestion was actually made, but not pressed very strongly, that the combined unions should carry on the fight under other leadership. The men

were far from convinced that they were yet beaten. The implied threat of victimisation in the terms of settlement didn't make it any easier for the Strike Committee to have its "sell out" accepted. The Defence Committee's own official statement reveals the general dissatisfaction with the terms:

"A majority of the unions directly involved agreed to accept. Several absolutely refused. Some deferred their decision to a later date. The Committee believes there is a grave danger of a renewal of the whole dispute."

The return to work was just as disorganised as the initial exodus. When the members of those unions who had decided on a resumption reported for duty they found they were expected to fill in a form headed, "Form of Application for Re-employment of Men who left Duty on Strike." As a concession to the mass protest which greeted this the words, "Who Left Duty on Strike," were deleted. Even so hundreds refused to fill in these forms. Figures published by the Commissioner on September 12, claim that 9,849 of the men who reported for duty were prepared to fill in the forms, whereas 10,652 refused. However, when it became obvious that no unanimity existed the men began signing the amended forms at the rate of 1000 a day.

It took another month to force the workers in other industries back to work. The miners only resumed on October 3, while the seamen and wharflaborers remained out until October 18. Kavanagh and his colleagues were then released. The Court found them not guilty on two charges and on a third count remanded them to appear if called on. Their arrest on trumped up charges had served its turn. It had robbed them of what little heart they might have had for the struggle and ensured that their influence would be exerted in favour of a speedy capitulation.

The struggle at times presented the Government with some complicated legal problems. These are dealt with in the official report,[1] and provide in their way a most interesting sidelight on the role of the State in capitalist society.

"Amongst the problems which confronted the Government from the beginning of the strike were:

1. What legal position would be created by the Government taking over private property and services and managing, using, and conducting same, without the consent of the owners of such property or services, in order to allay public alarm and prevent great public loss?

2. To what extent the controllers of public utilities should be relieved of their Statutory obligations when operating under conditions which could never have been contemplated by Parliament as

1. N.S.W. I.G. Special Supplement to Vol. 13, No. 2, February, 1918.

within the bounds of reasonable probability at the time when it legislated for the regulation of such utilities?

"It was of course obvious with respect to the first question that the appropriation of private properties and services would be illegal and might be restrained by injunction; that private rights could not be rightly invaded, that notwithstanding considerations of State necessity the law recognised no distinctions between offences committed in the name of the State and those committed by a private citizen.

"The Executive showed that it was prepared to do acts which constituted infringement of private rights, but the support which it received after it declared this attitude made it unnecessary to take any steps in which it was not voluntarily and unanimously supported by those whose rights were effected.

"It was recognised that there are times of civil commotion 'when for the sake of legality itself the rules of law must be broken.'" (My emphasis, E.W.C.)

The question of the legality of the Government's action was later raised before the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, during an appeal to cancel the registration of the Miners' Federation. The Arbitration Court referred the matter to the High Court. The High Court was specifically asked to determine whether the proclamation taking over the coal mines was valid, which, under the circumstances was a most embarrassing question. But calling on the wisdom of Solomon the High Court answered that, "The necessities of the case put before it did not require that any specific answer be given." This left it up to Mr. Justice Higgins, who presided over the Arbitration Court. There was no ambiguity about his answer. "The proclamation," he said, "was wholly invalid and was not worth the paper it was written on."

Another interesting sidelight comes from the case of the Fellmongers. The employers in this industry required the men, as a condition of their re-employment, to sign a pledge that they would not oppose the employers' application to the Court for the deregistration of the Fellmongers' Union, that they would resign from this union and join a new union to be established by the employers. The case was referred to the Arbitration Court and the Judge, Mr. Justice Heydon, delivered a very interesting homily on the equal rights of employers and employees before the law. His discourse quite unwittingly proves how the scales of justice are heavily weighted against the workers. It is seldom that the curtain is lifted to give such a clear picture of the real content of bourgeois legality. The labor movement should move a vote of thanks to Mr. Justice Heydon.

"It is all right for the employers to appeal for deregistration," he said, "but the workers have the right to oppose this. They also

have the right to say whether or not they will belong to any union. . . .

"There is nothing wrong in the employers trying to get rid of the union if it has done wrong. However, what may be right in itself may be done in a wrong way. The method may be unjust even though the end be defensible.

"A man who commits murder is liable to be put to death, but only after due trial and sentence, and only then by the hands of the officer of the law. He may be hanged, but he may not be lynched. Now what the employers have done here is to try to lynch the union."

Whereas, we presume, following the argument through, it should have been legally strangled together with all the other unions which participated in the strike.

The Government and the employers tried hard to press home their victory and to deprive the unions of their power to struggle for many years to come. A number of loyalist unions were set up to replace the old established organisations. A supreme effort being made in this regard in the Railway and Tramway services. But the loyalist bodies failed to flourish. Only one has been kept alive to perform its original splitting functions in the Railway service. But the N.U.R. today is nothing more than an aggravating parasite on the body of authentic unionism. Other unions soon recovered their strength and the strike wave which broke out again in 1919 was responsible for the loss of almost as many working days as were lost in 1917. A feature which strikes one about the Australian labor movement is its amazing powers of recuperation. Union after union has at one time or another received a severe drubbing at the hands of the employers or the government, but most of them have been able to recover fairly quickly and within a year or two resume the battle more full of fight than ever. This constitutes a happy omen for the future.

E. THE ATTEMPTS TO FORM ONE BIG UNION.

Among the several weaknesses revealed by the 1917 strike was the lack of unity among the various craft unions. This factor seems to have attracted more attention than any other in the period immediately following the collapse of the struggle. Various schemes for strengthening the organisation of the industrial movement were brought forward in the unions and Labor Councils. From the debates and discussions which followed there emerged the plan to form One Big Union. This was not the first occasion on which Australian unionists were attracted to the idea of a unified trade union movement. In 1891, at the Ballarat Intercolonial Trade Union Congress, William Lane's scheme for an All-Australian Labor Federation, was adopted. This plan never materialised, outside the State of Queensland. The conditions were not then fully ripe. But sub-

sequent developments, as we have seen, only confirmed more strongly than ever the need for a more closely knit organisation of labor on the industrial field.

In August 1918, a Trade Union Congress was held in Sydney with delegates from 150 organisations in attendance. The O.B.U. plan was placed before Congress and endorsed. The plan opened with a preamble, which was obviously inspired by the teachings of the I.W.W. However, it was a modified version of both the 1905 and 1908 I.W.W. preambles. It indicated that Australian militants had learned something from their own experiences and mistakes. This preamble gave the movement a definite socialist objective. It called for "a complete change, namely, the abolition of the capitalist ownership of the means of production and the establishment of social ownership." It also took a step forward from the syndicalist and sectarian position of the I.W.W., by recognising the need for political as well as industrial action. The proposed organisational structure was a slightly modified version of the I.W.W. plan.

The scheme was discussed by similar Conferences of the unions in other States, and ultimately an All-Australian Congress in Melbourne ratified the plan. However, like the Ballarat scheme, which preceded it by 27 years, the O.B.U. never materialised. It was wrecked by the opposition of craft union officials, the labor politicians and the A.W.U. bureaucracy. At first the A.W.U. was quite enthusiastic about the O.B.U. and boosted it through the columns of the "Worker." But when it became quite clear that the A.W.U. clique were not going to be the dominant force inside the new organisation they turned from support to bitter opposition to the whole proposals. The nearest the O.B.U. came to taking on any substance was when the Miners' Federation adopted the plan and changed the name of their organisation to Workers' Industrial Union of Australia; Mining Department. But this change of name by one union didn't build a new union. Other unions did little or nothing at all to ratify the decision of the All-Australian Congress and the O.B.U. scheme eventally collapsed.

The chief fault with the O.B.U. was that it aimed at wiping out at one stroke all craft differences, by compelling the craft unions to sink their identity in the new organisation. Craft traditions and prejudices were far too strong and too deeply ingrained to be removed overnight in this easy fashion. Industrial unionism is undoubtedly an advance on craft unionism, which no longer corresponds to the conditions of modern industry, but industrial unionism cannot be achieved outside of, nor over the heads of the craft unions in Australia. Industrial unionism will only be realised through those who are conscious of its benefits continuing to work within the existing

craft unions, striving for ever closer unity, amalgamation, federation and absorption, in accordance with circumstances as they develop. Paper schemes which fail to take into account the state of the movement as it exists, and which seek to supplant this movement by something entirely new, are bound to fail, no matter how "scientific" they might appear to be.

In summarising the history of the war period we see that the Australian labor movement was given the opportunity to thoroughly test the two extremes of Reformism and Revolutionary Syndicalism. Both proved equally barren, because both are equally the products of spontaneity, which condemns the labor movement to bourgeois domination. The common source of reformism and syndicalism is revealed by Lenin:

"Bourgeois ideologists, liberals and democrats," he wrote, "who do not understand Marxism and the modern labor movement, are constantly jumping from one helpless extreme to another. Now they explain that it is all because wicked persons 'incite' class against class, and now they console themselves that the workers' party is a peaceful party of reform.' Both anarcho-syndicalism and reformism must be considered as the direct product of this bourgeois world outlook and influence. They both seize upon *one* side of the labor movement, raise this onesidedness to a theory and declare as mutually exclusive such tendencies or features of the labor movement as form the specific peculiarity of one or other period, of one or other of the conditions of activity of the working class. But real life and real history *include* in themselves these various tendencies, just as life and development in nature include in themselves both slow evolution and rapid leaps, breaks in gradualism.

"The Reformists consider as phrases all arguments about 'leaps' and about the principles underlying the antagonism of the labor movement to the old society. They accept reforms as a partial realisation of socialism. The Anarcho-Syndicalist rejects 'petty-work,' particularly the utilisation of the parliamentary tribune. In practice these latter tactics amount to waiting for 'big days,' and exhibit an inability to gather the forces for big events. Both the Reformist and the Anarcho-Syndicalist hinder the most important and urgent business of uniting the workers in big, strong and well-functioning organisations, capable of functioning well under *all* circumstances, imbued with the spirit of class struggle, clearly recognising their aims, and trained in the real Marxian world outlook."[1]

The bankruptcy of reformism and syndicalism, which was revealed during the war, emphasised the need in Australia for a party of a new type. Such a party was formed in 1920, when the inaugural conference to found a Communist Party was held in Sydney.

1. Lenin: Differences in the European Labor Movement, Marx-Engels-Marxism, p. 81/2. Lawrence & Wishart Edition, 1941.

CHAPTER V

THE EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, 1920-1945

A. THE STRUGGLE FOR A UNIFIED COMMUNIST PARTY.
B. THE A.L.P. ADOPTS THE SOCIALISATION OBJECTIVE.
C. THE CAMPAIGN FOR AFFILIATION TO THE A.L.P.
D. THE PARTY IS STRENGTHENED BY PURGING ITSELF OF OPPORTUNIST ELEMENTS.
E. THE PARTY GROWS IN STRUGGLE.
F. FOR WORKING CLASS UNITY AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR.
G. THE PARTY AND THE WORKING CLASS IN THE PEOPLE'S WAR AGAINST FASCISM.

A. THE STRUGGLE FOR A UNIFIED COMMUNIST PARTY.

"The formation of the Community Party (October 30, 1920) was one of the decisive revolutionary acts of the Australian working class. It was the outcome of the experience gleaned in the struggles and growth of the labor movement from 1890 to 1920.

In this period the working class experienced the limitations of 'Liberal' Labor Governments and Reformist trade unionism. It experienced the futility and bankruptcy of socialist sectarianism (Socialist Labor Party, Australian Socialist Party, etc.) and anarcho-syndicalism (the I.W.W.).

The formation of the Communist Party represented the victory of Marxism-Leninism over these various petty-bourgeois, pacifist, 'socialist' theories.

At last the Australian workers started to find the true path to their emancipation, i.e., along the lines of the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism, embodied in the Communist Party. The formation of the Communist Party was therefore, one of the historical milestones on the road of the Australian working class towards its liberation."[1]

The historical decision to form a Communist Party was made at a Conference of left-wing and socialist groups, called together in

1. Notes on Party History, From a Lecture by L. Sharkey, p. 2.

Sydney by the Australian Socialist Party,[1] on October 30, 1920. A Provisional Executive of 12 was elected, including three representatives of the A.S.P., to administer the affairs of the new party until such time as the participating groups had consulted their members, wound up their own affairs, and completed the merger

The Conference reassembled on November 6 and 13 to ratify the decisions of October 30 and to review the work of the Provisional Executive. Here the representatives of the Australian Socialist Party adopted a factionalist attitude, which delayed the unification of the revolutionary forces in Australia for almost two years. This delay was most unfortunate both for the Party and the Labor movement, since it prevented the rapid growth of the new organisation at a time when objective conditions strongly favoured the revolutionary trend. Absence of a united Party hampered the struggle against reformism when the latter was most discredited and undergoing a deep crisis. When unity of the Communist Party was finally established in the middle of 1922, the first post-war period of revolutionary upsurge was already drawing to a close, to make way for the new phase of capitalist stabilisation. Reformism, which had been able to manoeuvre and to recapture some of the prestige it had lost during the war, was temporarily strengthened and communism for the time being was retarded in its growth.

The A.S.P. delegates to the November Conference opposed the immediate ratification of the October decision to form a united Communist Party. They claimed that more time was needed by their organisation to consult the membership and to wind up its affairs. Subsequent events proved that these objections to immediate unity were not legitimate and were advanced merely to cloak ulterior aims.

It seems that the A.S.P., which can claim the credit for initiating the move to form a Communist Party, was loath to part with this initiative. It viewed the formation of a Communist Party in Australia as a process whereby the other revolutionary groups would be absorbed by the A.S.P., which would change its name, without at

1. A Socialist League was formed in Sydney in August, 1887. In 1907 it changed its name to Socialist Labor Party. In the same year a small breakaway group formed a Social Democratic Party, later known as the International Socialist Club. In July, 1907, a Unity Conference was held in Sydney. Delegates attended from the Victorian Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, the International Socialist Club, the Barrier Socialist and Propaganda Group, the Social Democratic Vanguard (Brisbane) and the Social Democratic Association (Kalgoorlie). The combined financial membership of these groups was 2000. The Unity Conference resolved to combine these various groups into a Socialist Federation of Australia, the two S.L.P. delegates dissenting. The Socialist Federation later became the Australian Socialist Party.

the same time effecting any radical changes in the structure, methods of work, or leading personnel.

These ideas conflicted with those of other delegates, who were averse to having their organisations swallowed by the rival A.S.P. The opposition to the A.S.P. centred in a Trades Hall group of left-wing trade unionists, most of whom had been prominently associated with the O.B.U. movement. Undoubtedly faults on both sides contributed to the bad situation which developed. These faults had their roots in the general theoretical backwardness of the Australian labor movement and the immaturity of communism. Lack of sound socialist theory among the would-be founders of the new revolutionary party resulted in petty personal differences becoming magnified and exaggerated beyond all proportion to their real significance. Questions involving principles were in consequence relegated to a subordinate place in discussions. Charges and counter-charges of deceit, trickery and intrigue, filled the air as the leaders of the A.S.P. and their rivals jockeyed for leadership and control of the new party. In the prevailing atmosphere it must have been exceedingly difficult for an honest revolutionary to determine which side was in the right. But history leaves no doubt that the A.S.P. leaders were chiefly to blame for the schism which held the Party back during the first two years of its existence.

The November Conference brushed aside the objections of the A.S.P. delegates and ratified the earlier decisions to form a new party. W. P. Earsman was elected the first general secretary. The A.S.P., refusing to be bound by this majority decision, took the unforgivable step of withdrawing its members from the Executive and setting itself up as *the* Communist Party, in opposition to the Party formed at the "all-in" Conferences of October and November.

Thus militant workers, who were turning away from reformism and syndicalism, and beginning to approach communism, found their approach complicated by the need to first of all decide which of the rival parties really represented this new trend in Australia. Both the Trades Hall group, which established itself in the old Sussex Street headquarters of the I.W.W., and the A.S.P. group, which continued to operate from the Liverpool Street headquarters of the sect, were equally vociferous in their claims to be the "only official communist party." Actually neither group could yet claim to be a real communist party, since neither had mastered the first principles of Bolshevik organisation, which calls for unity and discipline within a single party. "The Party can lead the practical struggle of the working class and direct it towards one aim only if all its members are organised in one

common detachment, welded together by unity of will, unity of action and unity of discipline." [1]

Of the two organisations, however, the Sussex Street group came closest to being the nucleus of a real Communist Party. It did set out to build a party of a really new type and to conduct its activities in the spirit of Lenin's teachings. It possessed one overwhelming advantage over its Liverpool Street rival, that was its connections with the masses, the trades unions and the labor party branches. That is one reason why, in spite of many other disadvantages, it, and not the A.S.P., made the greater headway.

"A Party is invincible if it is able to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and to a certain extent if you like, to merge with the broadest masses of the toilers—primarily with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian masses." [2]

"A Party perishes if it shuts itself up in its narrow party shell, if it severs itself from the masses, if it allows itself to be covered with bureaucratic rust." [3]

Bureaucratic rust had long been accumulating over the A.S.P. Changing the name to the Communist Party didn't automatically cleanse the apparatus, which went on functioning in the old sectarian manner, in isolation from the masses. That is one reason why the A.S.P. eventually perished, while the Communist Party, since June, 1922, when unity was achieved, has grown and flourished.

Both Parties sent delegates to the Third World Congress of the Communist International, which met in Moscow in June-July, 1921. The C.I. directed that before any question of affiliation could be considered unity would have to be established. It gave both parties until the end of January, 1922, to compose their differences and unite in a single organisation. No recognition of any Communist Party in Australia would be extended until unity was realised. The C.I. pointed out to the Australian delegates that no differences on questions of principle existed between the parties. It was only local, personal, and petty details which kept them apart. These could quite easily be overcome by discussion within a united party.

The A.S.P. leadership, dominated by petty-borgeois intellectuals, rejected the Comintern's unity proposals. For a time their bureaucratic grip on the Party machine enabled them to perpetuate the split, but in June, 1922, the rank and file, disgusted with the disruptive tactics of the leaders, staged a revolt. A substantial section broke away and linked forces with the Sussex Street Party.

1. Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) p. 47.
2. Lenin, Collected Works, Russian Edition, Vol. XXV, p. 174.
3. Short History C.P.S.U. (b) p. 362.

Socialist sectarianism, in the shape of the A.S.P., was not the only obstacle to be overcome on the way to a unified Communist Party in Australia. Anarcho-syndicalism also provided its quota of trouble. In February, 1922, the I.W.W., which then went under the name of the Industrial Propaganda League, was admitted to the Party as an autonomous body. This represented a departure from Marxist-Leninist principles of party organisation. Marx, in 1868, opposed the admission of Bakunin's anarchist International Alliance into the First International, as an autonomous body retaining its own programme and organisation. He insisted that the Alliance be dissolved and that its sections accept the Programme of the First International as a condition of membership. Lenin, in 1902-3, waged a fierce struggle against the separatist tendencies of the Jewish Bund. The relations between the Industrial Propaganda League and the Party were severed in April, when the former withdrew, after it had failed to prevent a decision that the Party members on the Labor Council should support a Manifesto upholding trade union participation in politics and favouring the return of a Labor Government. In spite of all the initial difficulties the Party made quite considerable headway. Its propaganda and activity in the mass organisations, particularly the trade unions, began to attract attention and to win new supporters.

B. THE A.L.P. ADOPTS THE SOCIALISATION OBJECTIVE.

Recognising the serious danger they were in if the already widespread dissatisfaction with reformism was not checked, the Labor politicians, early in 1921, took what was for them a bold and unique step. They caused the Federal Executive of the A.L.P. to convene an All-Australian Trade Union Congress to draw up a programme which would give expression to the desires of trade unionists throughout the Commonwealth. It was made clear that the decisions of the Trade Union Congress would be placed before the A.L.P. Executive for submission to an A.L.P. Conference. The convening of such a trade union congress by the Parliamentary Labor Party was without precedent in the annals of the movement. It clearly indicated the stage of bankruptcy reached by reformism.

The proposals did not awaken the enthusiastic response anticipated by the politicians. Some of the larger and more militant unions viewed the invitation with the utmost suspicion and were not at first disposed to give it serious consideration. But when it was recognised that if the larger and more progressive unions stayed away the small craft unions, which were more conservative, would dominate the Conference and determine its policy, this attitude of aloofness was reversed. When the Congress assembled in Melbourne, in June,

1921, it was found to be the largest and most representative gathering of trade unions yet held. It is estimated that the aggregate number of unionists represented at the Congress was in the vicinity of 700,000.

The President of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, E. J. Holloway, who was also the President of the A.L.P. Executive, occupied the chair. In his opening remarks Mr. Holloway explained why the Conference had been called. There had been lightning changes all over the world, he said, changes which had to be studied. Some members considered that the programme and objective of the Australian Labor Party no longer corresponded with the changed conditions, that it was, in fact, obsolete. The Federal Executive was alive to the fact that great numbers of workers were not satisfied with the policy of the A.L.P. The Executive had called this Congress to hear from the trade unions what they really wanted. An A.L.P. Conference would be held at a later date to give effect to any changes proposed by the Trade Union Congress.

The outcome of two days debate on the programme and objective of the A.L.P. was the adoption of the now well known, but little mentioned, Socialisation of Industry objective. Congress also spent some time discussing trade union organisation and methods of work. A detailed scheme of industrial unionism, on the O.B.U. pattern, was drafted by a special committee and endorsed by the Congress.

In the following October the Federal Conference of the A.L.P. was held in Brisbane. The main business was to receive and consider the decisions of the Melbourne Trade Union Congress. State Conferences, with the exception of Queensland, had met prior to the Federal Conference and had instructed their delegates to support the Socialisation resolution. The few months interval between the two Conferences had given the reactionary politicians time to work out their tactics for nullifying the results of the Trade Union Congress. E. G. Theodore led the frontal attack on the Socialisation objective. If it were adopted, he said, the Labor Party might just as well change its name to the Communist Party and be done with it. However, the resolution to change the objective was carried by 22 votes to 10. A further motion to place the Socialisation plank in the forefront of the fighting platform was then advanced. This was in keeping with the desires of the Trade Union Congress, which expressly stated, "That all parliamentary representatives be required to function as active propagandists of the Socialisation objective. . . ." But Theodore and Co. succeeded in having this motion rejected in favour of another calling for the establishment of a special sub-committee to consider the whole question and report back to Conference. Theodore had himself elected on to this Committee, and there, behind the scenes, succeeded in doing what he had not been able to accomplish in open

Conference. Conference hadn't dared to reject the Socialisation plank out of hand. Most of the delegates were bound by State Conference decisions to support it. Some perhaps really desired it. But not the right-wing politicians. On the Committee Theodore insisted that it should be a recommendation to Conference that the Socialisation plank and the methods of achieving it be adopted merely as an ultimate objective and thus excluded from the fighting platform of the Party. In spite of stubborn opposition on the part of one or two of the more progressive delegates he swung the Committee his way. When the report embodying these proposals was tabled for endorsement by Conference, the late Maurice Blackburn moved an amendment to the effect that the first plank in the fighting platform be the Socialisation of Industry. Unless this were adopted, he maintained, Conference had been wasting its time. If Socialisation were to be relegated to the obscurity of a pious objective, it would meet the same fate as other objectives, it would be pigeon-holed and forgotten. Ernie Lane, who attended the Conference as a proxy delegate for Tasmania, seconded Blackburn's amendment and made an impassioned appeal to Conference to adopt Socialisation as a fighting plank. But the amendment was defeatede by 20 votes to 11, and the motion adopted, much to the joy of Theodore and the whole right-wing camp.

Pressure from the left had for a time stirred the politicians out of their customary state of lethargy. It compelled them to accept a change in the Party's objective. But the attitude of Theodore and Co. left no room for doubt that this change would lead to no alteration in their reformist practice. Socialisation for them was a useful manoeuvre to placate the militants within the Party and to arrest the drift of the masses towards communism. Having served its purpose the objective could be comfortably shelved and forgotten. Little or no mention was made of the Socialisation objective in Labor's election campaigns following the Brisbane Conference. If the candidates referred to it at all it was only to apologise for its existence. It was revived by the A.L.P. in N.S.W. in the depression years of the 'thirties, and, objectively, it served the same purpose as when it was first adopted, namely, to provide a buffer between the leftward moving masses and communism.

Undoubtedly the propaganda and activities of the Communists in 1920-21 contributed to the situation which compelled the A.L.P. to alter its objective to Socialisation. But the Communist Party was not yet strong enough to effectively counter all the manoeuvres of the right-wing reformists. Its youth, inexperience, theoretical backwardness and lack of unity prevented it from placing itself at the head of the radicalised workers and developing the revolt against capitalism and reformism to higher levels.

C. THE CAMPAIGN FOR AFFILIATION WITH THE LABOR PARTY.

After the Third Congress of the Communist International the Party in Australia intensified its efforts to apply Lenin's united front tactics and to carry into effect the slogan of the Congress, "To the Masses." These efforts were strengthened when unity was established in June, 1922. In December the first united Party Conference was held. J. B. Miles was present as a delegate from Brisbane. At this Conference the first Party Constitution and rules were adopted. The main business discussed, apart from the Constitution, was the application of the line of the Communist International to Australian conditions. It was decided that the best form in which the united front could be realised would be through the Party becoming affiliated with the Labor Party. At this time the Party had quite good connections with the unions and the Labor Party through Garden and Howie. It carried out a great deal of mass agitation and activity, although this was not fully reported in the revolutionary press at the time. One of the most successful campaigns initiated by the Party in this period was the drive for funds for the relief of victims of the Russian famine, brought on by the wars of intervention. This campaign was led through by the Labor Council in New South Wales and by J. B. Miles in Brisbane. The Party organ, the "Communist," was more of a theoretical journal than a popular newspaper. Much space was devoted to abstract questions of principle and very little to the burning issues of the day. This arose partly from the need to explain Communist theory and to combat the errors of reformism and syndicallism, and partly from the lack of a theoretical organ.

After the December Conference a really good campaign in support of affiliation with the A.L.P. was developed. On April 28, 1923, a United Front Conference was held in Sydney which was attended by 150 delegates from 100 different trade union bodies. Power, a prominent member of the Labor Party, chaired the Conference in the morning, and Jack Howie, of the Labor Council and the Communist Party, chaired the afternoon session. The Conference demanded that the Labor Party change its rules to permit the affiliation of other working class parties, with the right to maintain their own independent organisation and to conduct their own propaganda, while loyally accepting majority decisions of representative conferences of the A.L.P. This resolution was widely publicised and popularised by the Party throughout the labor movement. At the same time the Party was taking up the immediate economic problems of the workers, especially those of the seamen and miners. On the eve of the annual Labor Party Conference the Party published an appeal to delegates to support the "United Front and Fighting Policy" which would be put forward by progressives. On June 2, the A.L.P. Conference

assembled, with Garden, Howie and some other Party members present in the capacity of elected delegates from certain trade unions. The question of Communist Party affiliation came up for discussion at the June 4 session. A lively debate ensued which culminated in the Conference dividing evenly on the motion to admit Communists. The voting was 122 for and 122 against. The Chairman, A. C. Willis, delivered his casting vote in favour of the motion. This made Labor history. It was the first decision in favour of Communist Party affiliation to be adopted by any labor party in any part of the world. The British Communist Party gave it great attention and moulded their own tactics accordingly in the campaign there for affiliation to the British Labor Party.

The Party followed up the decision of the Easter Conference with an appeal through the Press to its own members and the rank and file of the A.L.P. to make the affiliation real. However, it turned out that the Party was still too immature and politically inexperienced to develop the situation and to combat the sabotage of the right-wing reactionaries in the Labor Party. Lang and Loughlin led the struggle inside the A.L.P. to reverse the decision of the 1923 Easter Conference. J. T. Lang actually made his way to prominence in the Labor Party by his attacks on Communism and the left-wing progressive forces. It is interesting to note, in view of subsequent developments, that the "Workers' Weekly," the organ of the Communist Party, took up the struggle against "Langism" in 1923.

During 1923 the Party continued its activities in the trade unions, paying special attention to the mining industry. J. B. Miles, who was then Secretary of the Building Trades Council in Brisbane, began to contribute Industrial Notes to the "Workers' Weekly," which helped to keep before the Party the tremendous importance of work in the trade union sphere. In August, 1923, unemployment became widespread in New South Wales and, as part of the campaign waged by the Party in the interests of the unemployed, a huge demonstration was staged outside Parliament House. Leading Party speakers were arrested at this meeting and this gave rise to a Free Speech fight in which the united front tactics were applied with remarkable success. Trade unions and local Labor Leagues were drawn into the struggle. Even the reformist leaders were pushed into activity and two M.L.A.'s, Baddeley and Murray, were arrested, along with Party speakers, in the course of the campaign, which ended victoriously.

Lang, however, maintained his attacks on Communism. He entrenched himself in the Auburn League of the A.L.P. and from there, and through the columns of the "Cumberland Times," attacked the Party day in and day out. Notwithstanding the Easter Conference decisions, Lang maintained that "The Communists were not and never

would be a part of the labor movement." He was afflicted apparently by the same form of mania which nine hundred years earlier had caused the Danish King Canute to bid the waves cease breaking on the shores of England. At first Lang's anti-communist crusade had little effect on A.L.P. supporters. But as capitalist stablisation developed, in the last half of 1923, and the first post-war wave of militancy receded, Lang's influence became stronger. The "Left" reformists, now that the pressure from below relaxed, also changed their tune and began to join in Lang's reactionary chorus.

A climax in the relations between the Communist Party and the Labor Party was reached in October, 1923, when the A.L.P. Executive violated the decisions of the Easter Conference by removing Garden and Howie from the Executive and expelling all known Communists from the A.L.P.

To emphasise the anti-democratic nature of this action, which was engineered from behind the scenes by Lang, it need only be mentioned that the expulsion motion was carried by a minority. Out of the 33 members of the A.L.P. Executive only 16 voted for the exclusion of the Communists. Ten opposed the motion, while seven sat on the fence and abstained from voting. This indicated that in spite of all Lang's manoeuvring there was still a strong sentiment for unity within the A.L.P. A canvass of opinion in the Leagues and Unions, carried out by the Party, showed that the rank and file were opposed to the Executive action by a 4 to 1 majority. The Party attempted to mobolise opposition to the high-handed action of the Executive. Many A.L.P. leagues and affiliated unions supported the demand for a Special Labor Party Conference to deal with the situation which had arisen. In December, 1923, the "Workers' Weekly" published a list of 70 Labor League and Unions which still supported Party affiliation to the A.L.P. But the Party drive lacked the necessary vigour and besides, was not given sufficient prominence in the Press. Lang and his cohorts resorted to "basher-gang" tactics to force their policy on the A.L.P. One unfortunate League Secretary at Granville was almost kicked to death for insisting on inner-party democracy being observed.

In December, 1923, the Third Annual Conference of the Communist Party was held in Sydney. Delegates present represented Party organisations on the Northern N.S.W. coalfields, Newcastle, Sydney, the South Coast, Brisbane and North Queensland. Perth was also represented by proxy. The Party had not yet mastered the principles of Bolshevik organisation. This is reflected in the holding of Annual Conferences, on the A.L.P. pattern, instead of periodical Congresses, and also in the election of an Executive, rather than a Central Committee. At the 1923 Conference an Executive of five

was elected, consisting of: Political Secretary, J. Garden; Financial Secretary and Editor of the "Workers' Weekly," H. Denford; Trade Union Leader, R. King; and Labor Party Leader and Organiser of the Sydney Group, H. Ross.

Following this Conference an improvement in the campaign to win support for the United Front was noticeable.

Beginning with the February 1st issue the "Workers' Weekly" ran a series of articles based on twelve reasons why the Communist Party should be affiliated with the A.L.P., in the general interests of the working class. In March, 1924, considerable space was devoted to reporting A.L.P. Branch activities, which seems to indicate that the contact with rank and file members of the A.L.P. must have been fairly well maintained. In April the Party press took up the question of the coming A.L.P. Annual Conference and the vital issues which would confront it. An attempt was made to influence the Conference decisions through the Labor Council, where the Party still enjoyed great influence. On April 18, the "Workers' Weekly" published a front page article setting out in detail the excellent programme adopted by the Labor Council, which delegates attending the A.L.P. Conference were urged to support. No stone was left unturned by the Party in its unity drive. But there was one Rock of Gibraltar which couldn't be moved and that was the A.L.P. Executive. The reformist politicians, headed by Lang, controlled the Executive and the Executive controlled the election of delegates to Conference. The result was a stacked meeting against Communist affiliation and unity. Many Leagues and Unions repudiated their delegates on the eve of the Conference because they were hand-picked by the Executive and not elected by the members. The "precautions" taken by the right-wing proved to be very effective. Affiliation of the Communist Party was rejected by 159 votes to 110. A very narrow margin to be sure, when all the circumstances are considered. An analysis of the voting shows that in actual fact the supporters of affiliation and unity represented a larger proportion of the membership than did the opposition. The 159 votes marshalled by the Executive came, in the main, from small country Leagues and insignificant craft unions, while the 110 votes in favour of affiliation came from the representatives of the largest and most important Leagues and Unions. The number of members represented by the supporters of the Executive was only 31,300, while the number represented by those in favour of unity was 113,000. Had a card vote been taken it would have revealed a 3 to 1 majority in favour of affiliation.

In mustering such excellent support for its proposals the Party was helped considerably by the hostility which existed on the part of many unions towards the corrupt and dominant Bailey faction in the

A.L.P. It was recognised that Communist affiliation would help cleanse and strengthen the A.L.P.

While the right-wing politicians were able to get their way on the question of Communist affiliation, they were not so fortunate on another matter, which they considered to be of almost equal importance, namely, freedom of action for themselves in the House. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, much of the internal life of the A.L.P. revolves around the relations of the politicians to other organs of the movement. The politicians had long since become accustomed to regarding themselves as the centre of the universe, so far as the labor movement was concerned. This notion was almost perpetually being challenged by one section or another of the rank and file, who stuck to the old fashioned, but thoroughly sound view, that the parliamentarians should be the servants and not the masters of the movement. The Easter Conference of 1924 provided its clash of opinion on this long debated subject. In spite of an attempt on the part of the Executive to prevent it, a resolution was carried that all candidates for Parliament should sign an undated resignation and deposit it with the Executive, as a guarantee that there would be no departure from the Party's platform when they reached office. Lang, as quite befitted one who aspired to become a dictator, led the attack against this decision. He defeated the aims of the resolution by threatening to resign from the leadership and from the Party if any attempt were made to enforce its terms.

The Party continued, through the columns of the "Workers' Weekly," to wage a campaign against faked ballots and corruption in the A.L.P It also continued its agitation in support of the economic struggles of the workers. A big step forward was made in August, 1924, when the New South Wales coalminers formed a Left-Wing Movement, with a revolutionary objective and a broad programme of immediate demands. This was the outcome of the Party's efforts to organise militant industrialists who supported its general aims, but who were not yet prepared to become Party members. On September 2, 1924, the movement launched amongst the miners was carried a stage further, when a Central Left-Wing Movement was formed at a representative conference of militant unionists, held in Sydney. Another sign of Party growth was the launching of a monthly theoretical organ, "The Communist," on January 1st, 1925.

The Party in this period campaigned vigorously for closer trade union unity and for the establishment of a National Trade Union centre. At the same time, seeking to overcome the isolation of the Australian trade union movement and to strengthen its international ties, the Party advocated the establishment of a Pan-Pacific Trade

Union Secretariat. This particular campaign influenced the decisions of the Interstate Conference of Labor Councils, held in Adelaide, in July, 1925. This Conference recommended the formation of a Commonwealth Disputes Committee (which became the forerunner of the present A.C.T.U.). It also decided to convene a Conference of the trade unions of all countries bordering on the Pacific. These decisions reflected the revival of militancy which set in in the labor movement temporarily in 1925. On August 20, the British seamen went on strike in all ports of the Commonwealth against wage-cuts and the sell out of their union leader, Havelock Wilson, to the British Shipping Combine. The Party came out solidly in support of the British seamen and organised the collection of strike funds. Australian seamen supported their British comrades and the Tory Prime Minister, S. M. Bruce, threatened to deport the leaders of their union, Tom Walsh and Jacob Johnson, as well as Jock Garden, Secretary of the Labor Council.

The "Workers' Weekly" openly indicted Bruce as a tool of the overseas shipping interests and called on the workers for a mass campaign to prevent the threatened deportation of trade union leaders. In the course of this struggle Bruce appealed to J. T. Lang, who was then Premier of New South Wales, to lend him support. Lang is reputed to have thrown Bruce's letter into the waste-paper basket and to have demagogically told him to "do his own dirty work." Lang's anti-British, Australian bourgeois nationalism, plus the strong pressure from the left-wing in the New South Wales trade union movement, were behind this action. It contributed to the prestige of Lang, which he was busily engaged in building to suit his own reactionary purposes. However, it should be noted that while the members of the New South Wales Labor Government did not dare to throw in their lot with Bruce and come out openly against the strike, they did little or nothing to help the seamen to win.

In September, 1925, at the Interstate Labor Conference, the supporters of the Party advocated a general strike if Bruce attempted to implement his threat to deport trade union leaders. The reformists, who were in a majority, opposed this and advocated that resistance be confined to legal measures. Walsh and Johnson, who up to that time had enjoyed the reputation of being militant trade union leaders, under the stress of the sharpened class struggle, began to reveal their true characters. They were severely criticised by the Party, through the "Workers' Weekly," for not fighting their case in court along class lines and for relying on bourgeois legalism rather than the mass struggle of the workers to save them from deportation. The Party pointed out, and events proved it to be correct, that the logical outcome of the opportunist line followed by Walsh and Johnson would

be their complete capitulation to the bourgeoisie.

In September, 1925, another important strike took place, among the railwaymen, under the Queensland Labor Government. The Party sent organisers among the strikers and helped them to achieve a partial victory. There were also a number of strikes on the Queensland waterfront in which the Party participated. For its efforts on behalf of the struggling workers the Party was bitterly assailed by the capitalists and reformists alike

D. THE PARTY IS STRENGTHENED BY PURGING ITSELF OF OPPORTUNIST ELEMENTS.

State elections were held in New South Wales in 1925. The Party supported the return of the Labor Government, but decided, in addition to stand one or two independent Communist candidates. Garden was one of those selected and he polled only 300 votes. This brought to a head a situation which had been developing for some time among certain opportunists in the Party. G. Baracchi became the spokesman for this anti-Party group when he moved that the Party be forthwith liquidated to allow its members to enter the A.L.P. individually to transform that organisation from within. Twelve months earlier, to cap the expulsion of Communists from the A.L.P. in New South Wales, the Federal Conference of the Labor Party had adopted the notorious anti-Communist pledge. Baracchi's resolution represented a craven capitulation to the pressure of reformism. The Fifth Annual Conference of the Party, which took place over the Christmas holiday period, in 1925, dealt with this traitorous deviation and summarised its roots as follows:

"The period of revolutionary upsurge attracted to the Communist Party many types, from militant trade unionists to bourgeois Marxists. The subsiding of the revolutionary wave and the rise of reaction weakened their fervour. The inability of the Party to elect or assist in electing them to positions in the labor movement dampened the ardour of some with opportunist tendencies. . . ."

Baracchi met with little open support for his cowardly policy, but practically the whole of the Executive, including Garden, who was looked on as the leader of the Party, and Denford, the Secretary, soon afterwards left the Party and went over into the camp of reformism. Many prominent militants outside the Party also succumbed to the conditions of the period and the left-wing movement temporarily touched a very low level. However, the liquidationists did not succeed in putting an end to the Party. Some of the foundation members like J. B. Miles, E. J. Docker and Norman Jeffery, kept the Party together, while new forces growing up in the Party, Tom Wright and L. L. Sharkey, were soon to join forces with them in eradicating

opportunism and rebuilding the Party on Bolshevist lines.

In the first half of 1926 the Party tried to extend its influence in the trade unions and to build a strong left-wing movement. The "Workers' Weekly" of April 14, 1926, devoted a leading article to the task of forming a "Militant Minority Movement." The slogans advanced included, "Every Worker an Active Trade Unionist." The Party participated in the campaign of the Federal unions for a 44-hour week. In July it initiated a drive against the Bruce-Page referendum proposals to give the Commonwealth Government wider powers to "discipline the trade unions." This was after the High Court had delivered its verdict against the Government in the Walsh-Johnson deportation case. During July and August the Party press paid great attention to the pending Interstate Trade Union Congress. It called on the masses to make this gathering a step on the road to the "complete unification of the Australian working class." The Party's policy was partially realised when the Trade Union Congress decided to meet yearly, instead of infrequently as before, and to set up a General Council of a permanent character. Thus was established the A.C.T.U. whose birth had been foreshadowed at the 1925 Congress. The 1926 meeting also took a step forward on the Pan-Pacific question by deciding on concrete measures to expedite the holding of a Conference of all Pan-Pacific trade union movements.

In September the Party intensified its "Hands Off China" campaign. It also fought more vigorously against "Fordism," or the employers' attempts to intensify labor, subsequent to the realisation of the 44-hour week in New South Wales. But the Party was finding it increasingly difficult, under the conditions of capitalist stabilisation, to make rapid headway. Reformism, on the other hand, in the temporarily favourable situation, appeared to be forging ahead. In November, 1926, a Special Conference of the New South Wales A.L.P. gave supreme power to J. T. Lang as leader. This move was severely criticised by the "Workers' Weekly" at the time, which pointed out where Lang was bent upon leading the movement.

As the pressure on the party increased the opportunists revealed themselves more openly. The 1925 Annual Conference had dealt with the liquidationist tendency and expelled some of its open exponents. But it had not succeeded in completely overcoming this trend. Garden who was a liquidationist in practice was tolerated up to December, 1926, when he was finally expelled following a speech he made at Young renouncing his membership in the Party. Garden did not accept the decision without question and a prolonged discussion took place in the columns of the "Workers' Weekly." Garden accused the existing leadership of the Party, headed by Kavanagh, of isolating it from the masses. There was more than an atom of truth in this, as

later events were to show. Nevertheless, it did not in any way justify Garden's own attitude, which would have led to equally disastrous results for the Party. The controversy revealed, among other things, that Garden, who came into the Party from the ranks of left-wing trade unionism hadn't yet succeeded in breaking decisively with his petty bourgeois, pseudo revolutionary past. He did not, even when regarded as a party leader, have a firm grip of Marxism. Nor had he a clear conception of the Party's leading role. Garden shared the weakness of many Australian Labor leaders. He exaggerated the role of the trade unions and belittled the role of the revolutionary political party. In his debate with the Central Executive, through the "Workers' Weekly," Garden quite frequently referred to the Labor Council as "the spearhead of the revolution."

By the middle of 1927 the capitalist rationalisation drive was in full swing. In July Judge Beeby tried to insert piece work clauses in the metal trades award. The Party led a fight against this. In August two American workmen, Sacco and Vanzetti, were sentenced to death on framed up charges of committing a "hold-up." This legal murder shocked the workers of every country. In Australia the Party succeeded in organising big protest demonstrations in all the capital cities. In September the N.S.W. State elections were held and the Party supported the return of a Labor Government, specifying that its aim was to facilitate the exposure of reformism. In the same month the Queensland Labor Government locked out its employees in the railway service. The Party in the North took an active interest in this struggle. However, it was not yet strong enough to win the leadership and the railwaymen were defeated. J. B. Miles contributed a series of articles to the "Workers' Weekly" analysing the strike and pointing out how the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party had sabotaged the railwaymen's cause. In November, as a result of capitalist rationalisation, unemployment was becoming a serious problem and the Party took up a fight on behalf of the workless It put forward the demand for "Work or Full Maintenance at Basic Wage Standards" and aroused mass support. Big demonstrations of unemployed were held at the gates of Parliament House, Sydney, which were dispersed by the police. Similar demonstrations took place in Melbourne under Party leadership. The Party advocated the formation of a united unemployed organisation which should be closely linked with the trade union movement.

In December, 1927, the "Workers' Weekly" began to publish a series of articles calling on the miners to set up Pit Top Committees to organise a struggle for a 30-hour week and £5/10/- national minimum wage. Early in 1928 the Prime Minister, Mr. S. M. Bruce,

indicated his intention to call an Industrial Peace Conference of the unions and the employers. The Party launched a vigorous struggle against this move to strengthen class collaboration to the detriment of the workers. On March 3, 1928, an important conference of militant miners was held in Sydney. Thirty delegates attended from all the districts and adopted the following six point programme:

6 Hour Day and 5 day week.
£5/10/- National Minimum Wage
Abolition of Contract System.
Abolition of Coal Tribunal.
Abolition of District Agreements and establishment of National Agreement.
Socialisation of Industry.

Co-incidentally with the holding of this conference the "Workers' Weekly" was campaigning for extension of the Militant Minority Movement. The objects of the movement were set out:

1. To increase the power of organised labor by promoting class consciousness and stimulating activity in the unions on all matters affecting their interests.
2. To endeavour to bring about closer organisation by urging the principle of the One Big Union and favouring the amalgamation of crafts on the basis of one union in each industry.
3. In times of industrial crisis to assist the workers as a vanguard and to expose the betrayers of the struggle.
4. To develop among workers a spirit of dependence on their own collective strength as a means of forcing concessions from capital and defence against attack
5. To work for the abolition of all contract, bonus and piece work systems of wage payment.
6. To organise for a shorter working week.
7. To bring into existence a centralised industrial movement linked with the Red International of Labor Unions.
8. To assist the development of the working class movement towards the overthrow of capitalism and for the socialisation of industry.

The Party should have succeeded in winning support from a large number of trade unionists for its immediate programme of radical demands. The workers were beginning to feel the effects of capitalist rationalisation and were losing confidence in their old reformist leaders. However, the work of the Party was marred by traits of opportunist sectarianism which developed among those who had supplanted Garden and Co. in the leadership. From 1926 the dominant leadership of the Party, headed by Kavanagh, were more and more revealing a dangerous tendency to draw the Party away

from the masses, away from mass struggle Whereas in the earlier period the Party had paid close attention to developments in the A.L.P. and tried to win over the rank and file, while isolating the reactionary leadership; under Kavanagh it held itself aloof. It refrained, for instance, from utilising the oppositional and faction fights inside the labor party to open the eyes of the masses, help isolate the right-wing, and facilitate the dissolution of reformism. During 1927 the majority of the unions supported the Searle, so-called "industrial," faction in the A.L.P., while the petty bourgeois elements in the Leagues tended to line up behind the corrupt Bailey-A.W.U. faction which had control of the machine. The Party characterised the fight as simply a case of opportunists struggling among themselves for control of the movement It couldn't see the wood for the trees, couldn't see beyond the personalities Searle and Bailey, and take into account the industrial workers who supported the former. Consequently it adopted the attitude of "a plague on both your houses." It is true that there was little to choose between the leading personalities on both sides, but this did not justify the aloof stand of the Party under Kavanagh's leadership. The rule formulated by the Kavanaghites, allegedly to safeguard the purity of the Party, that "Every Party member must declare his party membership in order to prevent work in the A.L.P."[1] only played into the hands of the reactionaries.

On the trade unions question the same sectarian attitude hampered the growth of the Party. "A Communist could only take office in a union when the majority of union members accepted Communism" and even then, Kavanagh declared, "must return to work in industry after two years in office."[2]

This sectarianism of Kavanagh was opposed by a strong group of Sydney Party members who were supported by some comrades in other States. To combat this legitimate opposition the Kavanagh clique sunk to the level of the reformists. At the Xmas, 1927, Party Conference they prepared by organising a number of "new" branches in North Queensland and came to the Conference armed with from 3 to 5 proxy votes each. These Tammany tactics enabled them to remove comrades Sharkey and Norman Jeffery from the Central Committee in a futile effort to silence criticism and maintain their grip on the leadership Nothing was heard of the "new branches" after the Conference.

World capitalism was now approaching a new period—the break up of temporary, partial stabilisation and a severe intensification of the general crisis. Stalin had sounded a warning of these impending

1. Notes on Party History by L. Sharkey, p. 5.
2. Ibid, p. 5/6.

changes at the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in December, 1927. In his report he stated, "From stabilisation is born the growing crisis of capitalism." The 6th Congress of the Comintern (July 18 - September 1, 1928) analysed the world situation and pointed out that we were entering a third period in the development of post-war capitalism. The first period had been characterised by acute economic and political crises; the second period was marked by relative stabilisation; the third period is distinguished by a sharpening of the basic contradictions of capitalism leading eventually to the complete shattering of stabilisation.

"This third period renders inevitable a new phase of imperialist wars between the imperialist nations, of wars waged by them against the Soviet Union, of wars of national liberation against imperialism and against imperialist intervention, of gigantic class battles. Accentuating all international contradictions, accentuating the internal contradictions in the capitalist countries, unleashing colonial movements, this period inevitably leads through the further development of the contradictions of capitalist stabilisation, to the further shattering of capitalist stabilisation."[1]

The Sixth Congress also indicated the role which reformism would play in the new period. It would come to the aid of the bourgeoisie, as it had in the first and second periods, it would assist capitalism by all means in its power to overcome the growing new crisis at the expense of the working people. The Communist International, therefore, called upon its sections to launch a most determined offensive against Social Democracy. The Communist Parties were urged to come out independently and lead the masses in the sharp struggles which lie ahead.

These decisions, which embodied a drastic change in revolutionary tactics were anticipated in Australia. Before the Sixth Congress concluded, the "Workers' Weekly," on August 24, 1928, published the "Queensland Resolution." This important document was worked out by the Party here in collaboration with the Executive Committee of the Communist International. It outlined the new tactics to be applied in the approaching Queensland State elections. Analysing the situation in Australia, it pointed out that the class struggle was sharpening, that this represented the influence of world economic and political events upon this country. Confronted with mounting difficulties employers were determined that existing wage standards must be abandoned. Reformist leaders, it was stated, had formed an open coalition with the capitalist class. They had assumed the role of open policemen. This made it necessary for the Com-

1. Resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the Report of the Executive Committee.

munists to adopt tactics of more clear and open hostility to the reformists and to expose their true character. In Queensland, the resolution continued, the Communists will no longer adopt the tactic of giving unqualified support to labor candidates. This tactic was correct only until such time as the futility of parliamentary action could be demonstrated by the labor governments to backward workers. McCormack and Co. were branded as class enemies, therefore the Communist Party declares to the workers they must be treated in the same way as the openly avowed capitalist candidates. Whenever the resources and Party machinery permit, the resolution concludes, the C P. will put up candidates to challenge the labor party representatives. In other districts it will support only such labor and independent working class candidates who accept its programme of immediate demands,

The Queensland resolution was thus in perfect keeping with the decisions of the Sixth World Congress which followed within a few weeks of its adoption by the Party in Australia. This was not clearly understood by the Kavanagh faction, whose opportunism became more openly apparent as the class struggle mounted in this country.

The drive for capitalist rationalisation had proceeded since 1925 under the leadership of the Bruce-Page government. In carrying out its policy in the employers' interests this government adopted a series of repressive Acts, including the Amendments to the Crimes Act in 1926 and the Amended Arbitration Act in 1928. It was anticipated that these coercive measures would deter the workers from struggling against lowered living standards. In May, 1928, the shipowners locked out the marine cooks and demanded the abolition of the roster system of engaging labor and a reduction of staff. In the ensuing struggle the Crimes Act was invoked to send Seamen's and Wharfie's Union officials to gaol. In September, 1928, the Waterside Workers refused to work under a new and vicious Federal Award. The Government again used all its newly acquired powers to crush the strike. The Federation was fined £1000 for "encouraging and inciting a strike." Still the workers were not cowed and the government found it necessary to supplement its strike breaking powers with another Act—the Transport Workers' Act, or as it is more widely known, the "Dog-Collar Act." This Bill provided for the licensing of persons as transport workers It virtually gave the government power of life and death over waterside workers, since anyone who took part in a strike disapproved of by the government could be deprived of his licence and thus debarred from earning a living on the waterfront. Many arrests were carried out during the course of the Waterside Workers' strike and four workers were shot by the police on the Melbourne waterfront.

In January, 1929, Judge Lukin announced a new award for timber workers. This award took away the 44-hour week, reduced wages and generally worsened working conditions. The timber workers came out on strike against this class biased award and their union was fined £1000. In addition, thirty-two members of the organisation were fined £100 each, in default, three months' gaol.

In March, 1929, the Northern N.S.W. mine owners locked out 12,000 miners, in an attempt to enforce a 12½ per cent. wage cut. This was the beginning of a fifteen months bitter struggle during which miners were attacked by the State forces and Norman Brown was shot dead in a demonstration protesting against the employment of scabs in the Rothbury pits of R. W Miller and Company, Cessnock.

These happenings verified the Queensland resolution's claim that the class struggle was becoming more acute in Australia, they emphasised how necessary it was for the Communist Party to come out independently and lead the workers. However, the majority of the Central Committee, influenced by Kavanagh, could see no contradiction in operating the policy of independent leadership in Queensland while at the same time advocating support for the Labor Party in the 1928 Federal elections.

The main article in the "Workers' Weekly," October 19, 1928, was headed, "HERE IS YOUR CHANCE OF PUTTING BRUCE OUT" — "COMMUNIST POLICY IN THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS." "The most important issue confronting the workers of Australia at present," this article maintained, "is the attack on wages and conditions launched by the capitalist class against the waterside workers and the miners as a preliminary to a general attack on the standards of living of the entire working class." Instead of calling on the workers to organise their own forces to resist these attacks under party leadership, the article urged them to "Put the acid test on their politicians," to compel the labor politicians to take a stand against the capitalist offensive. The fact that the reformists everywhere were facilitating this offensive and helping to carry it out, was ignored. Instead of a clear cut exposure there was a glossing over of the role of reformism. Instead of sharp opposition there was qualified support for the Labor Party. This policy clearly violated the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. It was not supported unanimously throughout the Party. In Sydney two members of the Central Committee, Sharkey and Moxon, opposed the line of supporting the Labor Party. In Brisbane J B. Miles headed the opposition. Two letters were sent to the Central Committee, protesting, on behalf of the Queensland membership, against the decision to support Labor candidates in the Federal elections. These protests were ignored by Kavanagh and Co. Those opposed

to the Kavanagh opportunist policy decided, in the interests of party unity and discipline, to carry out the decision in regard to the Federal elections, and to reserve their criticism until the campaign was over.

The Bruce-Page government was returned to power and continued with unabated vigour the attacks on living standards. This, as already mentioned, provoked the militant struggles of the timber workers and the miners. The Government also tried to supplement its coercive measures by deception. It sought to further hamstring the trade unions by bringing the reformist leaders into an open coalition through an Industrial Peace Conference. Thanks largely to the opposition mobilised and led by the Party these plans fell through.

It was in this atmosphere of sharpening class struggle that the Queensland State election campaign opened. On April the 5th the "Workers' Weekly" featured a report of a great mass meeting addressed by J. B Miles in Brisbane. On April 26 the front page heading was, "Communists Leading Fight Against Bosses Two Parties in Queensland." The Party stood two Communist candidates and gave strong support to three other left-wing candidates (one being Fred Patterson). The Labor Party suffered a decisive defeat, a fate which later befell all governments, State and Federal, Labor and Nationalist, who had been carrying out the capitalist offensive. The five candidates supported by the Party polled 3000 votes. This was no mean achievement, having in mind the weak state of the Party organisation in the North at the time, plus the fact that the Central Committee did not give all the support of which it was capable to the Queensland campaign. More important than the number of votes cast was the fact that the Party gained strength through the campaign. Many new recruits were won to the Party and some new branches established.

A discussion on the lessons of the campaign was opened in the Party press. In the course of this discussion the differences in the Party were brought into the open. On May 31 J B. Miles contributed an article, "The Challenge to Capitalism and Reformism." In this he traced the history of the Queensland resolution, pointing out that the question of running Communist candidates in the Queensland elections was first considered by the Party Conference in 1927. The idea was further developed in collaboration with the Communist International. Out of these deliberations developed the Queensland resolution. "The new line in relation to the A.L.P. therefore avoided being a Queensland adventure, IT BECAME A PART OF THE WORLD WIDE INTENSIFIED STRUGGLE AGAINST REFORMISM."

It was precisely this wide significance of the Queensland Reso-

lution which was lost upon the Kavanagh faction, who had by now become part and parcel of the international right-wing which had made its appearance in practically all communist parties at that time. The Kavanaghites denied the general validity of the Queensland Resolution. Their thesis, presented to the Eighth Annual Conference of the Party in January, 1929, represents the Queensland Resolution as having purely local significance. It is true that the C.C. Resolution on the Labor Party brought forward by Kavanagh and Co. at the Eighth Conference characterised in a general way the reactionary role of reformism in Australia. "The A.L.P. is a nationalist labor party . . . it has betrayed the workers . . . it is the agent and saviour of capitalism . . . etc." The tasks of the Party were also more or less correctly stated in similar general terms—". . . to capture the masses from reformism. . . ." But the Party had been repeating such things at its conferences and in its press from the time of its formation. What the resolution failed to recognise was the new situation and the new tasks which it posed. The time had arrived for going over from such general propaganda statements to concrete mass actions to wrest the masses away from reformism in the changing conditions of acute class struggle. But these aims found no reflection in the resolution. Nor was the real significance of the Queensland Resolution recognised. The opportunism of the right-wing is illustrated by the following passages from the resolution:

> "While the above characterisation of the A.L.P. (as the agents and saviours of capitalism, etc.) does not distinguish between any sections of the A.L.P. in different states, or between the McCormacks and Langs, the Scullins and Hogans, it would indeed be a mistake, and unforgivable for the Communist Party to apply mechanically and blindly the same tactics in the various States. This tendency on the part of some comrades to confuse the question of principle, i.e., the political fundamentals involved, with the question of tactics, is a mistake to be condemned. . . . In the light of the foregoing the Queensland Resolution stands out as it was intended as an instrument of applying this general policy (of openly opposing the reformists) to a given concrete situation. It should be noted even in Queensland we are hampered by our own organisational weakness."

This phrase, "organisational weakness," soon became a firm favourite with the right-wingers, who used it to excuse every conceivable sin of opportunism. However, there were people in the Party who were not deceived by this subterfuge and who were convinced that the chief fault was not so much organisational weakness but the political weakness of the majority of the Central Committee, who were departing from Marxism-Leninism.

Two members of the Central Committee who had for some time

been critical of the line taken by the majority were L. L. Sharkey and Herbert Moxon. They conducted a fight on the Committee to have the decisions of the Sixth World Congress applied in Australia. After the Queensland elections and during the discussion on the 1929 Federal election policy, Sharkey and Moxon came out more openly and sharply against Kavanagh and Co. who advocated that no Party candidates be stood in the Federal elections and that the Party give support to the Labor Party. In the "Workers' Weekly," August 9, 1929, Moxon had a signed article entitled, "C.I. NEW LINE CORRECTLY APPLIED IN QUEENSLAND." In it he stated, "The Queensland Resolution was the Communist Party of Australia's first application of the new line of attack on reformism and it was completely justified by results." Moxon appealed to the Party to "Make the new line general." "Upon our experiences in Queensland," he wrote, "the Communist Party must make immediate preparations for the application of the new line to all States and in the Federal sphere." "Contrary to a popular belief among some comrades (a retaliatory blow at Kavanagh and Co. and the phrasing of the Eighth Conference Resolution) there is but one reformist party in Australia, and its (the A.L.P.'s) policy is one of collaboration with capitalism, is an anti-working class one, whether it be in Western Australia or in Queensland, N.S.W. or Tasmania or elsewhere. The A.L.P. stands always for reformism, for capitalism."

The further intensification of the class struggle involved the Bruce-Page government in fresh difficulties and precipitated another Federal election in 1929. The immediate cause of this new election was the proposal of the government to transfer to the States all Arbitration jurisdiction, excepting only the maritime industry. There seems to have been two main reasons for this step: 1) The existing arbitration machinery was proving too cumbersome. The overlapping of Federal and State jurisdiction was hampering the employers' offensive against wages and conditions. 2) The stubborn resistance of the Timber-workers to the vicious Lukin Award of the Federal Court. Bruce first tried to get full power for the Commonwealth Government to handle the situation. He asked the State Premiers if they would accept Federal supremacy in arbitration. When they refused he announced that the Commonwealth would withdraw from this sphere altogether. The gnome-like William Morris Hughes, who in Australian politics has been "everything by starts and nothing long," led a revolt inside the Nationalist Party against Bruce's proposals. The Labor Party, in keeping with its role of "developing and strengthening the country and creating a central government," joined hands with Hughes and defeated the government.

The "Workers' Weekly," September 20, 1929, hit the nail on the head when it stated that the Federal elections arose out of the industrial

struggles of the Australian workers. But it strayed far from revolutionary Marxism in outlining the Communist programme to meet the situation. "The Communist Party calls on the workers to smash the Nationalist Federal Government and welcomes the prospect of a Labor Government which would in the present circumstances inconvenience the employers' plans and may provide a short breathing space in which preparations could be made to meet a new attack. . . . The Communist Party desired to put forward its own candidates in this election, but due to organisational and financial difficulties this course cannot be taken. . . . As there are no revolutionary candidates and the choice lies only between Nationalist (direct agents of capitalism) and the Labor Party (which is still subject in some degree to working class pressure) the Communist Party urges workers in the present circumstances to vote Labor. . . ."

In the issue of the "Workers' Weekly," September 27, we find an attempt made to justify this opportunist line. "It is only the realisation that the Bruce Government must be smashed and that the revolutionary movement is still organisationally weak that causes the Communist Party to advise the workers in this election to vote for the Labor candidates against Bruce."

Sharkey and Moxon alone on the Central Committee came out against this policy. They upheld the decisions of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International. Fearing that all their sophistry would not avail them if the Sixth Congress decisions became widely known among the membership, Kavanagh and Co. sat tight on all the material from abroad and refused to publish it either in the "Weekly" or elsewhere. To break this conspiracy of silence Sharkey and Moxon published an important document from the Communist International on their own responsibility. For this they were severely censured by the right-wing and threatened with expulsion from the Party if they dared to repeat the "offence." Still in disagreement with the majority of the Central Committee, Sharkey and Moxon cabled the Executive Committee of the Communist International protesting against their censure and setting out their views on the Australian situation. The E.C.C.I. in reply upheld the position of Sharkey and Moxon and condemned Kavanagh and Co. for their opportunism.

The letter from the Communist International analysing the situation in Australia was published in the "Workers' Weekly" in December. In the meantime Bruce had been defeated in the elections and the Scullin Government returned to office. The Right-wing Central Committee greeted this result in the "Workers' Weekly," October 18, under the heading, "ELECTION RESULT IS DECLARATION OF RESISTANCE TO WAGE CUTTERS — MAKE LABOR GOVERNMENT REVERSE BRUCE'S POLICY." This of course was only strengthening illusions concerning the labor party's

role in the crisis, which was still maturing. The question was not one of making the Labor Party reverse Bruce's policy, it was a matter of the Communist Party realising that the top leaders of the Labor Party had entered into open alliance with the bourgeoisie, and coming out independently to lead the masses into action against them.

On October 25 discussion opened in the Party press in preparation for the coming Ninth Annual Conference. The degree to which the revolt against opportunism had ripened is illustrated by the headlines in the "Workers' Weekly"—"DISCUSSION OPENS WITH A BROADSIDE ON ELECTION POLICY." A joint article by Sharkey and Moxon was published sharply criticising the Central Committee and characterising the election policy as "treachery to the working class." "The independent leadership of the Communist Party is the biggest question facing communists today," this article stated. "The workers are given two alternatives: organise under an independent leadership and fight, or capitulate to capitalism and its reformist allies. . . .

"The Communist International has reaffirmed the line formulated at the Ninth Plenum and adopted at the Sixth Congress, the line in accordance with the third phase of post-war capitalism—Class Against Class. Our qualified support for the reformists in the second phase is repudiated and a new line of the independent leadership of the Communist Party takes its place EVERYWHERE.

"In Australia the right-wing danger has been allowed to flourish without adequate check from the membership as a whole and the leadership in particular.

"The right-wing anti-Comintern policy adopted in the Federal elections in 1929 is the most glaring recent example of the utter repudiation of the single world line of the revolutionary working class.

"In Queensland the Party operated for the first time the new line of the Comintern. . . .

"The plea of organisational weakness contains some truth, but it is not the reason for the capitulation to the bureaucracy by the Central Committee. . . .

"We two alone (Sharkey and Moxon) opposed the C.C. line in the Federal elections. The majority were wrong, and, as a Central Committee, now fails to criticise its mistakes. . . .

"What are we to do?

1. Bring our party line into line wtih the C.I. policy
2. Fight reformism at every step
3. Win authority as leaders of the workers in struggle
4. Break down the habit of Australian workers of being spectators at demonstrations. Lead them in demonstrations locally and nationally
5. Give a call to the workers to break decisively with the

labor government and win them over to Communism."

The article closes on a challenging and confident note:

"It is a definite lie to say we can do nothing because we are only a small propaganda sect, WE ARE A PARTY."

J. B. Miles, who was not yet on the Central Committee, had an article in the same issue, under the title, "*Forward, Not Backward—Confusion and Opportunism in the Federal Elections,*" in which he criticised the Central Committee for "tailism."

In the November 15 issue of the "Workers' Weekly" Kavanagh attempted to reply to the criticism of Sharkey, Moxon and Miles. He claimed, in opening, that the Central Committee policy in the elections was correct, and accused his opponents of "repeating parrot fashion phrases culled from the C.I. decisions without attempting to relate them to actual conditions. . . ." Miles and Sharkey and all who supported them, according to Kavanagh, suffered from "romanticism." History has certainly proved the superiority of their "romanticism" to Kavanagh's "realism." In unfolding his defence Kavanagh showed that his deviations from Marxism were not of recent origin. For some time he had harboured differences with the Communist International. It took the sharpening of the crisis and the accompanying increased pressure on the Party to force these differences out into the open. According to Kavanagh the time for the most intense criticism of the Labor Party was in the second post-war period. Instead, he claimed, "The united front tactic was mechanically applied and merely led to the liquidation of the party." This is distorting history with a vengeance. Therefore it is not surprising to find Jesuit tricks practised in the remainder of the article, which makes believe that the difference on the Central Committee did not arise over the major question of running communist candidates against the reformists, but over the secondary question of whether or not the informal vote should be advocated. Upholding the decision of the Central Committee, Kavanagh concludes, "The correct policy, the policy the C.C. adopted was to tell the workers to defeat Bruce, to put the Labor Party in power during the period of the capitalist offensive in order that the masses might experience objectively the reactionary character of reformist parties, and the futility of capitalist parliaments." Here one clearly sees the theoretical bankruptcy of the "theoretician" Kavanagh. He was no more advanced than the socialists of the nineties, who thought that a Labor Party had only to be formed to automatically become socialist. Just like these early leaders of socialism in Australia, Kavanagh bows to spontaneity and fails completely to recognise the vital role of consciousness, of theory. This consciousness of its historical mission can only be brought to the working class by the socialists organised as a political party. Not a party satisfied with a propaganda role, but a party that will come out independently, leading

the masses and teaching them in action. There was some historical justification for the backwardness of the earlier socialists—the economic backwardness of Australia and the relatively undeveloped state of class antagonisms. There was no such justification for Kavanagh's opportunism. The Australian working class had accumulated a wealth of practical experience, including experience of the reactionary character of the reformist parties and the futility of capitalist parliaments. It was the duty of the Communist Party in accordance with the teachings of Marx and Lenin (embodied in the decisions of the Sixth Congress) to make the most of this in a determined bid for independent leadership. But Kavanagh, in spite of all his posturing, never had a grip of Marxism-Leninism. To cover up his own ignorance he insults Australian workers. "The present generation in Australia are practically strangers to the works of Marx and Engels. It is not to be expected that a great number will ever be familiar with these works." * Nor would they had it been left to Kananagh and Co. to make these works available, judging from their treatment of important overseas documents. "It is unfortunate that it should have to be said, but it is nevertheless true, that the Party in Australia has got to go back to Marx before it can assume the dignity of a Leninist Party."

Supporting reformism, which was openly carrying out the capitalist offensive, is "going back to Marx," according to Kavanagh. Is there no end to the crimes attempted by the opportunists in the name of "Marxism"—their brand? Contrast this feeble attempt to defend the policy of retreat with the vigorous self-confident assertion of Sharkey: "We are a Party!" and having attained that dignity are duty bound, as summed up in the slogan of J. B. Miles, to go "Forward, not Backward."

In the "Workers' Weekly," November 22, Lance Sharkey returns to the attack: 'Moxon must be given full credit for a definite emphatic policy, the absolute opposite to the Central Committee's. He advocated:

1. No support for reformism, but a determined attack.
2. Party candidates in the elections.
3. Full application of the informal vote in electorates where no Party candidates were standing.

"While I agreed with him on the first two points, I believed we need not insist on the informal vote."

On December 6, 1929, an Open Letter from the Executive Committee of the Communist International to Australian Party members was published in the "Workers' Weekly." In opening it mentions the events leading up to the Queensland Resolution in 1928 and the reasons for the latest communication. From this brief introduction it went on to

* Present day circulation of Communist Review, Party's theoretical organ, is 20,000 per month. Pamphlet on Dialectics sold 7,000 copies in few months. Books by Marx and Engels are sold out as soon as they appear.

review the situation confronting the Australian working class. The labor movement was going through a crisis of transition, it was pointed out, Australian capitalism, like world capitalism, was going through the third post-war phase—crumbling capitalist stabilisation. Australia was becoming the scene of an ever sharper competition between British and American capitalism. The Australian bourgeoisie was trying to play this up to ensure for itself an independent imperialist development. In order to compete on the home and world market the Australian capitalists were compelled to cut costs, to reduce living standards. This meant that the hitherto privileged position of the Australian workers was being shaken to its foundations. This found reflection in a growing process of radicalisation. The prospect was one of intense class struggles in the immediate future. A perspective which favoured the extremely rapid growth of the only revolutionary party—the Communist Party. If it were to take advantage of these conditions the Party must become the initiator, organiser and leader of economic and political struggles. It must learn how to act consciously and without vacillation. It was strongly emphasised by the E.C.C.I. that the decisions of the Sixth Congress and the Tenth Plenum of the Communist International and the Resolutions of the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions had been neglected by the Party in Australia. In support of this contention the Comintern pointed out how the Party, at the 1928 Conference could not give a proper political estimate of the Labor Party, or define its fundamentally social fascist character) its aggressive counter revolutionary role in the existing situation. "In the present, third post-war period, the role of the A.L.P. as an agent of the bourgeoisie stands out most clearly. The tactic now pursued by the Communist Party of Australia is not leading, but misleading, the working class. To support the Labor Party now is to support the enemies of the working class."

The document went on from this trenchant criticism to deal with the 1929 election policy. The decision of the majority of the Central Committee to support the Labor Party is characterised as a "glaring example of a grave right-wing deviation" and as such is "deserving of the severest possible condemnation." The E.C.C.I. warned that there was a serious danger of this policy leading to the liquidation of the Party if it were not checked in time. This is best illustrated, the E.C.C.I. letter goes on, by a statement from the "Workers' Weekly" on August 2, 1929. 'In this country there will be no strike on August 1. Not that Australian workers have less need than our fellow workers in Europe to demonstrate against imperialist war and the warmongers but that in this country the lines of the struggle have not yet become so clear and the working class is only beginning to realise that its enemy is capitalism and the capitalist state.

"The task of the militants in this country is not yet to lead the

working class in a direct challenge to capitalism, but to popularise the basic ideas of the class struggle amongst the workers, their wives and children. . . ."

To this we would add, continues the letter from the E.C.C.I., the following passage from the resolution of the Party Conference, December, 1928:—

"We must not lose sight of the fact that the way to the Communist Party leads through the left wing . . . not because we want it so, not because we in any way hesitate to transfer these masses directly from the path of reformism and Labor Party illusions to our own revolutionary ideology and action, but because the masses still hesitate to do so. This transformation is not effected through political miracles, nor will we accomplish it through virtuous isolation of the Communist Party from the masses, but it is a long and difficult process whose various phases we must help in speeding up. . . ."

The comment of the E.C.C.I. on these passages was sharp and to the point: "It must be said that such statements border on liquidationism. They are a denial of the elementary principles of the role and functions of the Communist Party. . . . Apparently the Communist Party of Australia regards itself as being merely a propaganda body, a sort of adjunct to the left-wing of the labor party, whereas our conception of the role and functions of the Communist Party is that it should be the leader of the working class and the principal driving force in its economic and political struggles."

The C.I. letter concluded with the valuable advice that the Party in Australia must reorganise the whole of its work in accordance with the 6th Congress decisions. It must rid itself of opportunism and turn its face to the masses, mobilising them for struggle against the bourgeoisie and its reformist allies.

One would have anticipated that such an important communication would have received a great deal of attention from the Central Committee and that the latter would have made a serious attempt to study the document and put the advice into practise. This was not the case. Kavanagh and Co. treated the E.C.C.I. letter in the same manner that reformists often adopt towards troublesome correspondence—"received and contents noted." The only sign of any response on their part is a short editorial in the "Workers' Weekly" on December 13, which states that, "The Central Committee considered the Open Letter from the Communist International. . . . It accepts it unreservedly and welcomes the call to the Party to assert itself more vigorously as the leader of the masses, etc. . . . The Central Committee recognises the Party has been lacking in self-criticism and has been guilty of serious right-wing mistakes. The C.C. has been slower than most members in reacting to these mistakes. . . ."

The editorial contained not a single word about how it was pro-

posed to rectify the mistakes and not a single word about how the Party was to rid itself of opportunism. Nor was there any indication of plans for reorganising the work of the Party in the spirit of the Sixth Congress decisions. No mention about coming out openly against reformism and capitalism. In fact, not a word about anything that really mattered in the Open Letter from the E.C.C.I.

In the following issue of the 'Workers' Weekly" J. Kavanagh had an article in his own name which entirely ignored the Open Letter. The title of this article was *"Election of Federal Labor Government has aided Revolutionary Development."* The sub-heading was *"Back to Marx to Capitalise the Situation."* The whole article was merely an apologeia for Kavanagh's right-wing mistakes combined with a supercilious attack on his legitimate critics.

In the same issue J. B. Miles had a vigorous article, which was written incidentally before the Open Letter was published. With characteristic bluntness it was headed, *"Where the Hell Are We?"* and launched into a merciless criticism of the majority of the Central Committee for their opportunist deviations from Marxism. The C.C. line in the Federal elections, he wrote, boils down to support for the A.L.P. In the new situation created by the third post-war period this is sheer treachery. J. B. Miles pointed out that he wanted an independent campaign in the 1928 Federal elections and two letters were sent by him from North Queensland to the Central Committee setting out these views. The Central Committee completely ignored this correspondence. There was considerable opposition to the C.C. Election Manifesto in Queensland, Miles continued, but those opposed to the policy of support for the Labor Party decided, in the interests of party unity and discipline, to throw themselves into the campaign. The high standard of discipline and the amount of energy displayed in the campaign in Queensland was, according to J. B. Miles, "the surest sign of a hell of a fight as soon as circumstances rendered it possible."

"It was necessary in Brisbane to exercise great care in the discussions which followed polling day The slightest sign of opposition on the part of those disgusted with the Manifesto would have brought about inertia if not total disruption."

The opening of the pre-Congress discussion, however, lifted these self-imposed restrictions on public criticism of the Central Committee line, and the "Hell of a Fight" forecast by J. B. Miles was not slow in developing.

The struggle reached its culminating point at the historic Ninth Annual Conference of the Party, held in Sydney on January 10, 1930. A cable was received from the Communist International setting out the main issues which confronted the Party. Once again it condemned the right-wing majority of the Central Committee and upheld the criticism and attitude of Sharkey and Moxon. The Conference

endorsed the policy of the Communist International and administered a stern rebuff to the opportunists. The censure imposed by Kavanagh and Co. on Sharkey and Moxon on October 21 was lifted. Both these members were re-elected to the Central Committee by an overwhlming majority in the ballot. They were joined by R. Dixon and T. Docker, who, together with J. B. Miles, had won the confidence of the membership for their part in the fight to get the Party back on to the right path of revolutionary struggle.

J. B. Miles was not elected to the C.C. at this Conference because he lived in Brisbane. Owing to an absurdly narrow organisational concept it was stipulated in the rules that C.C. members must be resident in Sydney. This anti-democratic rule was amended by the new C.C., and in 1931 J. B. Miles became general secretary. Kavanagh and other incorrigible right-wingers, who refused to recognise their mistakes, were defeated decisively in the elections to the new Central Committee. This Conference, which more correctly should be styled a Congress, marked a turning point in the history of the Party. It was here that the Party finally divested itself of its swaddling clothes and began to grow rapidly, strengthening its connections with the Australian masses in the process.

E. THE PARTY GROWS IN STRUGGLE.

The new Central Committee began at once to act energetically. Organisers were sent to the coalfields to help the locked-out miners. Rank and file committees were set up and the Party raised the slogan, "All Out!" in the mining industry. This was the only way to bring the struggle to a head and win the miners' demands. While the pits in the north were closed the mines in other districts were producing to capacity. It was obvious that if the coal owners succeeded in starving the northern miners into subjection the wage cuts would soon be extended to other fields. The reformist leaders of the Federation tried to confine the struggle to the north and advised the members in other districts to remain at work and only give financial support to the fight. This policy objectively played into the hands of the coal owners. The party exposed the reformist leaders and also the Scullin Government, which had promised to open the pits during its election campaign and had received liberal financial support from the miners in consequence. When elected, however, the Scullin Government cynically discarded its promises to the miners and openly assisted the coal owners. The struggle on the coal fields sharpened arrests, batonings and gaolings became commonplace under the Scullin Government. In N.S.W. the Nationalists, led by Thomas Bavin, were in power. This government attempted to place scabs in the mines. The miners marched to the scab pits at Rothbury to induce the non-unionists to cease work. It was in this demonstration that the police opened fire with their revolvers, killing Norman Brown and wounding several others. The

Party and militant miners began to organise Workers' Defence Corps to protect themselves from such violence. The Party slogan, "All Out" and its struggle for a general stoppage were sabotaged by the reformist leaders, who ultimately forced the miners to capitulate and return to work on the terms of the government and coal owners. The campaign, however, laid the basis for the Party's influence on the coalfields. It is no accident that the Miners' Federation was the first important trade union in Australia to elect communists to official positions. Had the right-wing leadership of Kavanagh and Co. been removed earlier it is possible that the outcome of the coalfields struggle would have been in favour of the miners.

The economic crisis was now effecting Australia in full force, the right-wing theory of "exceptionalism" was refuted and the policy of the Communist International and the new Central Committee vindicated. By March, 1930, there were already 200,000 unemployed and the number was growing each day. The Party had organised big demonstrations on International Unemployed Day, February 26, which were broken up by the police. The Party also began to organise the workless into the Unemployed Workers' Movement. The chief demands put forward were for increased "dole," a rent allowance, work at full award rates, and no evictions. The U.W.M. became a mass movement under Party leadership and waged a militant struggle on behalf of the unemployed.

In October, 1930, State elections were held in New South Wales. The Party contested 54 seats and polled just on 19,000 votes. This exploded another favourite Kavanagh myth about "organisational and financial weakness." The Lang Labor Government replaced the Bavin Nationalist Party in office. There were now Labor Governments in the Federal Parliament (Scullin) Victoria, (Hogan) South Australia, (Hill) and Tasmania as well as Lang in New South Wales. These Labor Governments carried out the capitalist offensive on wages and working conditions and savagely attacked the workers when they resisted The unemployed particularly suffered under these Labor Governments. Processions and demonstrations of unemployed in all States were attacked by the police who freely used their batons and revolvers. The Lang Labor Government in particular became notorious for the savagery of its attacks upon the workless. Anti-evictionists who barricaded themselves in the homes of workers threatened with being turned out on to the street were forcibly removed by armed police. Many were injured in these fierce struggles and hundreds were thrown into gaol. There were more workers sent to prison for political offences under the Lang Labor Government than at any time in the past history of New South Wales. Labor Governments in other States acted in the same brutal manner towards the workers. Their actions fully justified the Party's characterisation of them as "Social Fascist"

governments. The Party was not wrong in labelling them thus, as is sometimes maintained today. Sectarian mistakes were made on occasions by not differentiating between the leaders and the rank and file of the labor party. The term social fascist was often loosely applied to all members or supporters of the labor party. This prevented the full application of the united front tactics. Other sectarian mistakes of the period were declaring the dole "black" and in the attitude towards the police. Party speakers often antagonised rank and file policemen by their ill-considered abuse of the police force in general instead of directing their blows at the police chiefs and the governments. However, in spite of these sectarian errors the Party did succeed in drawing the masses into militant struggle and concessions were won and the prestige of the Party increased. In the first twelve months under the leadership of the new Central Committee the Party membership increased four times. R. Dixon summed up the situation in an article in the "Workers' Weekly." The year 1930, he wrote, has been one of great change. While much good work had been carried out by the Party under the new leadership there was still "too much generalising about the correctness of our policy and too little practical mass work." The Party had begun to organise on a factory basis, but many of the new branches were not active. He called on the Party to finally overcome opportunism by activising the entire party membership.

About the same time the Party had occasion to discipline Kavanagh. After they had been removed from the C.C. in January, 1930, Kavanagh and J. Ryan attempted to gain control of the Sydney branch. Ryan was expelled from the Party in March. Kavanagh continued to factionalise against the new Central Committee. He was severely censured in June for nominating as delegate from the Trades and Labor Council to the 5th R.I.L.U. Conference against the decision of the Party, and warned that unless he desisted from his opposition he also would be expelled. Finally, in December, 1930, he was criticised for cowardice in the Timberworkers' strike and for his theory that the "workers are in full retreat," hence it is useless to call on them for militant struggle. He was expelled from the Party soon afterwards.

Herbert Moxon, who had been associated with L. L. Sharkey in the struggle on the Central Committee against the right-wing, for a short time became General Secretary of the Party. However, Moxon revealed leftist characteristics which he failed to overcome, and which led to his expulsion from the Party. The Central Committee early in 1931 prevailed upon J. B. Miles to come to Sydney from Brisbane and assume the secretaryship of the Party.

The analysis of Sharkey, Miles, Dixon and others opposed to the right-wing, that the Labor Party in office during the crisis would further organise and fully develop the capitalist offensive commenced

by the Bruce-Page Government, was realised in full. This offensive, as already mentioned, was preceded by the "Industrial Peace" campaign and the visit to Australia of the "Big Four," British bankers whose mission it was to advise the Australian bourgeoisie how to organise and carry through the attacks on living standards. The Party had considerable success in exposing the "Big Four" and nullifying the Industrial Peace campaign. The Sydney Trades and Labor Council was pursuaded to reject this sorry scheme and it fell through, much to the disappointment of Garden and other reformists who at this time were very much under the sway of "Fordism." Henry Ford was regarded as the new messiah who had refuted Marx and the doctrine of the class struggle and shown how it was possible for employers and employees to peacefully collaborate to the mutual benefit and prosperity of both sides. Of course the developing crisis helped to smash these illusions and the Party slogan of "Class against Class" grew in popularity.

The "Big Four" were followed by Sir Otto Neimeyer who demanded, on behalf of the British bondholders, that the Australian capitalist class and their reformist servants set about balancing the Budget to enable them to meet their committments to the British banking and financial insitutions. The Scullin-Theodore Labor Government listened attentively to Sir Otto Neimeyer's advice and later put the capitalist economic experts to work formulating a plan to transfer the cost of the crisis to the working people. The State Premiers were called together in Conference with the Federal Labor leaders and the iniquitous Premiers' Plan was drafted in May-June, 1931. The Party raised the slogan, "Make the Rich Pay," and organised the workers against the Premiers' Plan. John T. Lang, the N.S.W. Premier, was the chairman at the meeting which adopted the Premiers' Plan, his was the first signature to the document which foreshadowed drastic wage cuts and worsened conditions. However, when Lang returned from the Conference he opened a demagogic campaign against the Premiers' Plan to create a smoke-screen behind which he prepared to put the Plan into operation. One of his retainers, an inconspicuous legal man, drafted the "Lang Plan" which was advanced as an alternative to the Premiers' Plan. The former called, among other things, for a reduction in interest payments on government loans. The "Lang Plan" was represented to repudiate interest payments entirely, but in fact only advocated the suspension of payments to London for a period of three years. The Party was quite correct in exposing Lang as a dangerous demagogue who was utilising the radical sentiments of the masses to extend his bureaucratic control over the labor movement and to advance his own career. Lang had visions of vacating the State sphere for Federal politics with the possibility of becoming Prime Minister. The Party failed in this period to bring forward with sufficient clarity and vigour its own independent proposals, which might

have succeeded in carrying the mass movement above Langism to a higher level.' The united front tactic was not applied as it should have been to win over the masses supporting Lang. The Party did not sufficiently link itself with the mass movement. It was often not sufficiently concrete in its criticism of Lang, which brought it into conflict with ardent but misguided rank and file Langites. To check the leftward swing of the masses the Lang controlled Executive of the A.L.P. allowed the Easter Conference to carry a resolution setting up Socialisation Units inside the Branches. These Socialisation Units were supposed to popularise the A.L.P. objective of Socialisation of Industry, etc. At first they developed as semi-autonomous bodies, meeting apart from the Leagues and conducting almost independent activity, such as classes and street corner propaganda meetings. In the early stages their propaganda did not go beyond the limits of Fabian socialism. But the radical section of the membership of the A.L.P. who were attracted to these units soon began to demand a more concrete approach to socialism, that is, they wanted more militant action and less "revolutionary" talk. To placate them, Garden, who by this time had patched up his earlier quarrels with Lang and was now the "Big-fellow's" adjutant general in the trade union field, came out with his own notorious claim that Lang is greater than Lenin. The more advanced of the Socialisation Units often invited Party speakers to address them. As they advanced beyond the utopian stage they became more of a menace to the Lang dictatorship and the edict went out, "smother them." This was to be done peacefully if at all possible, so as to cause the least possible embarrassment to the ruling junta. The first step was to limit the membership of the Socialisation Units to A.L.P. members and prevent outsiders from addressing them. Secondly, the Branch officials were to function as officials of the Units, which were to cease their semi-independent existence and be brought under more strict control of the A.L.P. Executive. The struggle reached a climax at the Easter Conference, 1931, which adopted the Payne Report one day and rescinded it the next. The Payne Report was drawn up by the left wing who supported the Socialisation Units and wanted to retain them and extend their functions. When the Conference rejected this report and gave the Socialisation movement the axe a group of the most advanced and progressive members resigned from the A.L.P. and joined the Communist Party.

While it was quite clear to the communists that Lang was a demagogue whose revolutionary phrases meant nothing, it was not clear to the workers who supported him. They really thought there was more than a grain of truth in what Garden said. They looked to Lang to lead them in a real revolutionary struggle against capitalism. The middle classes were also taken in by Lang's demagogy, they thought he had socialist aims, and since their vague notions of socialism were derived from the class biased capitalist press accounts of the Russian

revolution, they were extremely antagonistic to Lang. The crisis had thrown them off balance; their old peaceful habits of life were given a severe and sudden jolt; confused and bewildered, they didn't quite know who or what to blame for the calamity which had befallen them. If this stream of middle-class dissatisfaction had joined with the current of working class discontent, things might have become serious for the ruling class in Australia. The storm could be weathered however, if the radicalisation of the middle classes could be diverted and the attention of the working class occupied with something apart from wages and conditions, dole cuts and evictions. So the press got busy adorning Lang with all the virtues (for the working class) and vices (for the middle classes) of a revolutionary socialist. The Langites, headed by Beasley, in the Federal Parliament, had by this time brought about the downfall of the Scullin Government and Lyons had deserted the Labor Party, like Hughes and Holman before him, to head an anti-labor coalition. In the course of his demagogic campaign Lang withheld certain monies due for interest payments on overseas debts, leaving the Commonwealth Government to carry the baby. Lyons threatened to impound State revenue to make good the deficiency. The press was speculating on the prospects of civil war. In this tense atmosphere the New Guard was established as a semi-secret fascist organisation. No doubt the ruling class feared that the mass activity of the workers might get beyond Lang's control. The New Guard began to enrol the middle classes, who were led to believe that Lang was out to socialise their wives and confiscate their savings and personal property, and began to drill them on semi-military lines. The Party at once called for a united front against Fascism and reformed the Workers' Defence Corps to defend political meetings. The New Guard organised flying squads of "basher gangs" who would descend in car loads on workers' meetings, upsetting the platform and assaulting speakers and bystanders alike. The Workers' Defence Corps, which had developed out of the miners' strike and the unemployed and anti-eviction struggles and which were reconstituted and revitalised when the New Guard came on the scene, met and defeated the challenge of incipient fascism. The New Guard were driven off the streets. The Lang junta, who were always splitters, formed a so-called Labor Army, in opposition to the Workers' Defence Corps, to oppose the New Guard. Instead of correctly applying the united front tactic towards the Labor Army, the Party opposed it, calling it a "button army," because the promoters had worked out a profitable sideline of selling buttons to denote membership in the Labor Army. The theory being that when the New Guard saw how many people were wearing these buttons they would take fright and vacate the scene. Whatever the views of the leaders may have been there was no mistaking the temper of the rank and file Labor Army men, they were out after fascist blood, and meant to have it, so long as unprovoked attacks on working class meetings

continued. The party should have seized this favourable opportunity of uniting with the masses who were still under the spell of Langism and leading them in the fight against the New Guard and the bourgeoisie. Another favourable opportunity for united action was lost when Lang deliberately involved himself in a Constitutional crisis with the Governor, Sir Phillip Game, to provide an easy way out of a situation which was becoming more and more complex and difficult. ". . . Lang had done everything demanded by Sir Otto Neimeyer, the representative of the Bank of England, who visited Australia in 1930. He had reduced wages and salaries in accordance with the decisions of the Premiers' Plan, increased the taxation of lower incomes, put the unemployed on a starvation ration and suppressed the resistance of the Trade Unions and organised unemployed. In short, he had placed the main burdens of the crisis on the backs of the workers, farmers and middle classes.

The ruling class now resolved to get rid of him as he had served his purpose and his demagogy was arousing the workers to action. The Lyons Government, which Lang had brought to office, passed legislation enabling it to impound N.S.W. income to meet overseas interest payments. Lang replied by the most demagogic attacks on all and sundry. "If they force me far enough I will go the whole hog," he threatened. He urged the workers to stand by him. "The revolution is here," he shouted.

Then came the anti-climax.

Lang had issued an order instructing public servants not to hand over the funds of the State Government to the Federal Government. On May 13th, 1932, the British Governor to N.S.W., Sir Phillip Game, summarily dismissed the Lang Government from office, for "instructing public servants to violate Federal law."

All that Lang had to say when the news reached him that Governor Game had wiped aside the constitutional rights of the people of N.S.W. and dismissed the government they had elected, was: "Thank God I am a free man." He walked out of his office, got into his car and drove to his Hawkesbury farm and was not heard of for days after."[1]

The Party instead of leading the masses in united demonstrations against the Governor's undemocratic action and demanding that Lang be restored to office, where his exposure must have been faciliated, merely concentrated on exposing the whole thing as a hoax. The workers took Lang at his word and decided to wait for the ballot. In the meantime the bourgeoisie weren't leaving anything to chance. The whole of their vast propaganda resources were mobilised against Labor. All sorts of dire consequences were foreshadowed if Lang were returned. In addition to this most firms included in the pay envelope of their employees on the eve of the elections a notice to the effect that if Lang was returned they would reluctantly be compelled

1. The Story of J. T. Lang by R. Dixon, p. 16.

to close their establishment. This was the deciding factor. The main body of the workers did not heed this propaganda and voted solidly as they had long been accustomed for labor candidates. Backward workers and the middle classes, almost to a man, voted for the U.A.P. Lang was then able to come out and say that all was lost for the time being, the workers had let him, their great leader, down, and that the faithful would now have to wait another three years to rectify the electors' tragic mistake.

When the Stevens Government came into office the depths of the crisis had already been reached and it was beginning to pass over into a "depression of a peculiar kind." The Stevens Government put the finishing touches on the work already commenced by Lang of transferring the burden of the crisis to the masses. Thanks to reformism the resistence of the masses had for the time being been broken. The sectarianism of the Party had prevented it from doing more to combat reformism and lead the masses in a fully effective struggle against the capitalist offensive. Nevertheless the influence of the Party grew and it increased its membership and improved its organisation. The Party emerged from the crisis a Commonwealth wide organisation, with a stable central leadership and committees functioning in all States. Its connections with the trade unions and factories were also strengthened, and became stronger as the depression lifted and unemployed who had revolutionary experience were re-absorbed into industry.

F. FOR WORKING CLASS UNITY AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR.

The U.A.P. Governments, which came into office in the depths of the economic crisis, claimed the credit for the slight upward trend which set in in 1933. This, they maintained, was the direct result of their "wise" policy of public administration, in contrast to the "reckless" policies of Labor Governments under Scullin, Lang, etc. By this shibboleth the U.A.P. attached to itself the middle class "floating vote" and reigned for a decade in the parliaments of the Commonwealth and N.S.W. In usurping the title "saviours of capitalism," the U.A.P. politicians did their labor colleagues a grave injustice. It was not their "wise" policy so much as the working out of the internal economic forces of capitalism which were responsible for industry emerging from the lowest depths of the crisis.

"By means of the fierce intensification of the degree of exploitation of the working class, by means of the ruin of the masses of the farmers, by means of the robbery of the toiling masses of colonial countries, capitalism has succeeded in obtaining a slight improvement in the condition of industry. The increased exploitation that heightened intensity of labor, the reduction in wages—all this makes it possible for a number of capitalists to continue production even with a small demand and low prices of commodities. Prices of raw materials and foodstuffs have declined at the expense of the farmers, and toilers in the

colonies; this also means lower costs of production for the capitalists. The crisis has destroyed a tremendous part of the productive forces. The destruction of large quantities of goods has at last so reduced the reserves that the ratio between supply and demand has become more favourable. The wiping out of weaker enterprises has here and there closed the market for the surviving stronger ones. Thus industry has passed its lowest point. From this low point industry has entered the phase of depression." [1]

These were the factors, rather than the statesmanship of Lyons, Stevens and Co., which brought Australian capitalism out of the crisis. The chief points—wage cuts and speed up—were prominent features of the Premiers' Plan, the architects of which were Scullin, Lang and Co. The Labor Party, therefore, can justly claim to have laid the foundations of "recovery" on which subsequent U.A.P. Governments merely erected the super-structure. The Labor Governments also paved the way for political reaction.

This reaction which marked Australian politics from 1928 was part of a capitalist world-wide phenomena. Stalin drew attention to this trend in June, 1930. In his report on behalf of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union he stated, "The bourgeoisie will seek a way out of the economic crisis on the one hand, by crushing the working class, through the establishment of fascist dictatorship, i.e., the dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, most imperialistic capitalist elements, and, on the other hand, by fomenting war for the redivision of colonies and spheres of influence at the expense of poorly defended countries."

This is just what happened. In 1932, the Japanese imperialists, without declaring war on China, marched their troops into Manchuria. Thus there arose in the Far East what Stalin termed—"the first seat of war." In 1933 in the heart of Europe there arose a "second seat of war," with the coming to power of fascism in Germany.

"The German fascists inaugurated their home policy by setting fire to the Reichstag, brutally suppressing the working class, destroying its organisations, and abolishing the bourgeois democratic liberties. They inaugurated their foreign policy by withdrawing from the League of Nations and openly preparing for a war for the forcible revision of the frontiers of the European states to the advantage of Germany." [2]

The victory of fascism in Germany marked a big change in the world situation. The bourgeoisie of other countries went over to more intensified war preparations. This, besides adding to the economic burdens of the workers and farmers, was accompanied by increased political repression. Hitler's rise to power became the signal for the international bourgeoisie to take the offensive against the working class and its organisations, particularly its revolutionary vanguard, it became

1. Leontiev Political Economy, p. 281.
2. Short History C.P.S.U., p. 302.

the signal for a wholesale attack against democratic rights and liberties. On the other hand, the international working class was greatly shocked and bewildered by the triumph of the Nazis. The German working class had been regarded as the best organised, the most class conscious and revolutionary in the capitalist world. The German Communist Party had received six million votes at the last free Reichstag elections. How did it come about that such a powerful working class and such a strong revolutionary party were defeated overnight? Does this mean that nothing can stop the rise of fascism to power? Is the victory of fascism inevitable? These were the questions agitating the minds of the workers in all capitalist countries. A real danger of defeatism and demoralisation was imminent. But all at once these doubts were dispelled; confidence was restored and the militant class spirit recaptured. This transformation was wrought by the valorous defence of the Bulgarian communist, Georgi Dimitrov, at Leipzig. On trial for his life on the trumped up charge of setting fire to the Reichstag, Dimitrov defied his accusers, and converted the court proceedings into a thorough exposure of the real nature of fascism. The German workers were defeated because they were disunited. The victory of fascism is not inevitable. Fascism can be defeated by the united front of the working class. This was the gist of Dimitrov's message to the workers of the world from the dock at Leipzig.

Dimitrov's courageous stand evoked tremendous admiration and enthusiasm among communists and non-communists, among workers, farmers and intellectuals the world over. In every country a united front arose to demand his release. The Nazi hangmen dared not disregard this universal demand. Dimitrov was released. Fascism experienced its first major defeat and the united front had its first major victory. Dimitrov was granted Soviet citizenship and flew to Moscow. At the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, in August, 1935, he elaborated on and developed still further the views he expressed at Leipzig that the victory of fascism was not inevitable, that it was possible and necessary to prevent this victory through the united front of the working class.

Unity Against Fascism and War became the main slogan of the Communist Parties, including the Communist Party of Australia, after the Seventh World Congress. From its inception the Communist Party had persistently warned the workers that so long as capitalism lasted there would be the ever constant danger of new world wars. From its inception it had sought to organise and prepare the workers to meet such danger. Now, however, it was no longer a question of pointing out the danger of imperialist war in general, but one of struggle against a concrete and immediate threat arising from fascist aggression. The Party fought for an alliance with the Soviet Union as the most consistent peave-loving nation, it advocated international collective security in the Pacific for the maintenance of peace and the security

of this country. It fought relentlessly against reactionary legislation and all fascist tendencies in Australia.

The Party initiated a boycott of Japanese goods and organised strikes against the sending of war materials to Japan. It came out strongly in support of Abyssinia, demanding full economic sanctions and the closing of the Suez Canal. It called for full support for the Republican Government of Spain in its struggle against counter revolution and fascist intervention. Throughout this entire period the Party combatted the treacherous policy of the Australian ruling class the policy of "appeasement" and "non-intervention" and the equally treacherous policy of the labor reformists—"isolation." It exposed Chamberlain and Munich and showed how the British imperialists were planning to strengthen Hitlerism and promote a Soviet-German war. Considerable success marked these mass political campaigns of the Party. Through the Movement Against War and Fascism, the Hands Off China movement, the Spanish Aid movement and similar united front bodies large numbers of workers, farmers and intellectuals were drawn into activity side by side with the communists. However, thanks mainly to the resistance of the top leaders of the Labor Party the movement did not reach a sufficiently high level to reverse the dominant reactionary policy of the ruling class which was dragging the country into war.

On the economic front the Party also recorded a number of successes in the period succeeding the "depression" and the Seventh Congress. Party activity contributed to the rebuilding and revitalising of the trade unions. Responding to the stimulus of improved economic conditions and Party Propaganda the workers began to struggle to regain crisis losses. In the strike struggles of the miners, seamen and sugar workers the Party played a leading part. The Communists on the coalfields, together with leading Party organs, worked out a programme giving expression to the miners' demands and led two general strikes for its realisation. It was not unnatural that under these circumstances one union after another began to elect communists to executive positions. It was in the trade unions that the first fruits of the united front tactic were gathered. Trade union experience demonstrates that it is possible for communists and reformists to work side by side for the realisation of common immediate aims and, furthermore, that such working together strengthens not only the organisations involved but indirectly the whole labor movement.

Australian experience as well as the decisions of the Seventh Congress showed how necessary it was to extend the unity achieved on the economic field into the sphere of politics. The Party set out to achieve unity with the Labor Party. There was nothing new in the united front tactics as such. From its inception the Communist Party has fought for the unity of the working class. From a long range viewpoint unity is necessary for the victory of socialism, unity around

a revolutionary programme, unity under the leadership of a single revolutionary party. The Australian Labor Party cannot lead the workers to socialism because it is a national-liberal party of capitalism and not a socialist party. The Communist Party arose in 1920 partly because the limitations of the A.L.P. had become apparent. But this historical truth was realised only by a minority, constituting the vanguard of the Australian working class at that time, who went over into the new party. For the victory of socialism it is not sufficient for the vanguard alone to be convinced of the necessity for a new policy, new methods of organisation, of struggle, etc. The masses must also be won over, i.e., learn from their own experience (which the vanguard must help them to interpret correctly) to discard the old and adopt the new standpoint towards the class struggle. The united front tactic facilitates this process.

What is it that distinguishes reformism from communism? Reformism holds that reforms, i.e., slight improvements in wages and conditions, a wider franchise, etc., are an end in themselves and that the workers shouldn't concern themselves with ultimate aims. Reformism holds that such improvements benefit employers and employees alike and that these two classes should combine for their realisation. Reformism holds that strikes injure both the employers and employees, therefore these two classes have a common interest in eliminating industrial stoppages. Reformism, therefore preaches class peace and class harmony, which in effect results in subordinating the interests of the workers to their capitalist masters. Communism, on the other hand, holds that reforms are but a means to an end, a means of drawing the workers into militant struggle, a means of preparing them for the ultimate decisive struggle for the abolition of capitalism. These improvements, taken alone, mean very little and cannot be lasting under capitalism, since what is won in times of prosperity is soon lost again in times of economic crisis. While the capitalists retain their private ownership of the means of production and the workers are compelled to submit to exploitation by selling their labor power there can be no class peace. Communism, therefore, claims that ultimately no good but only harm can come from attempts to gloss over the class contradictions in society. The independent interests of the working class must be kept to the forefront and the class struggle allowed to develop to its logical conclusion—the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. From this it can be seen that the viewpoints of reformism and communism are widely divergent. However, they have one thing in common, they both favour reforms. It is true that the desire for reforms springs from different motives on the part of each party, but reasons apart, the fact remains that both express a desire for reforms, economic and political. It is this factor in common which provides the basis for immediate unity. Without such a factor common to both trends, unity would be impossible and the

united front tactic meaningless.

The application of the united front tactic has differed in different periods according to the stand adopted by the reformist leaders and the masses supporting them, and the state of the party. In the first years of the Party's existence the struggle for the united front took the form of a campaign for affiliation to the Labor Party. Affiliation was agreed to in N.S.W. in 1923, but the agreement was subsequently violated by Lang and the right-wing. The fight for affiliation, accompanied by support for the return of Labor Governments (mainly with the object of facilitating their exposure) continued up to the outbreak of economic crisis in 1928/9.

This was a period of the united front from above as well as below, made possible by the fact that the reformists, under the conditions of capitalist stabilisation, were not openly allied with the ruling class in attacks on the workers. On the contrary, they were in some cases the instruments through which concessions were granted, e.g., the first Lang Government and widows' pensions, 44-hour week for railwaymen and tramwaymen, etc.

In 1928, however, the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, analysing the world situation, reached the conclusion that a new economic crisis was approaching and it was inevitable that the role of reformism would change. Whereas previously, by playing the part of mediators and damming back the class struggle, and diverting mass discontent into peaceful legal channels, they had been able to serve capitalism while at the same time maintaining the pose of working class "benefactors," now the reformists would be forced out into the open, would become the chief organisers of the capitalist offensive. Under these circumstances the workers could only be united "from below" and against the will of the reformist leaders. It was this change in tactics which was resisted by the right-wing Kavanagh leadership which was removed from the Party in 1930.

The period of united front tactics from below continued from 1928 to 1935, when as a result of the greatly increased dangers of fascism and war, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International gave the lead for a further change. It became again possible and necessary to strive for the united front from above as well as below. This struggle was facilitated by the differentiation which began in the ranks of reformism, affecting not only the rank and file but also sections of the leadership, part of which came over to the side of struggle against fascism and co-operated with the Communists in various mass movements which sprang up.

This process of differentiation spread unevenly throughout the Australian Labor Party, expressing itself variously and to an unequal degree in the various States. It became most sharply defined in N.S.W., taking the form of a struggle to oust Langism. From the time he first disappointed his legion of supporters by tamely accepting his arbitrary

dismissal by Governor Game, the influence of Lang began to wane. Not automatically and not unaccompanied by certain unfavourable features for the labor movement. Many former Lang supporters became so disappointed or disgusted after the Governor Game episode that they lapsed into total inactivity, others, more numerous and spell-bound, accepted Lang's advice and were content to await future elections "to give him another chance." This section, in the grip of blind prejudice, unwittingly caused most harm. For a time they stubbornly resisted all approaches of the communists and refused to take part together with them in the day to day struggles. Instead of joining in militant resistance to new attacks of the employers, they were satisfied to meet the onslaught with a phrase, "Wait until Lang Gets Back." Only through the persistent propaganda and militant activity of the Communist Party was the great Lang illusion gradually dispelled and its tremendous harm remedied. Langism was dealt a mortal blow in the fight which developed around the questions of the control of the Labor Council radio station 2KY and the trade union press, the "Labor Daily." This struggle divorced Lang from the main body of reformist trade union officials who had previously constituted his chief support in the labor movement. It also brought to a climax the schism among his parliamentary supporters. Dissatisfaction had been growing among the latter at Labor's repeated failure to make any headway in State elections. The A.L.P. itself was demoralised, all initiative in the branches being stifled by the dictatorship of the junta, and the middle classes alienated by memories of the closing of the State Savings Bank. It became clear to the job conscious politicians that Lang would never lead them back into "the tart shop." This view was often expressed, but never in "The Leader's" hearing, because, shrewd reformist tactician that he was, Lang held fast to the purse strings of the Labor Party. All donations to the Party "war chest" were under his control. He was the sole dispenser of largesse. So in spite of their discontent with his leadership none among the labor politicians showed any marked inclination to challenge Lang's position. The challenge came, as so often was the case in the past, from the trade unions affiliated to the Labor Party. It arose, as already mentioned, from an attempt by Lang to secure a stranglehold over 2KY and the "Labor Daily." The Sydney Trades and Labor Council became the first battle ground and here Lang was defeated. But the fight could not be confined to these two questions, the enemy was repulsed but not yet beaten, the fight had to be carried right into his own camp. An "all-in" Conference of Unions was convened and labor politicians invited to attend. Mr. Heffron and three others accepted and were expelled by the Lang Junta. This resulted in the formation of the so-called Heffron Party. Outwardly the struggle conformed to the pattern of past internicine strife in the A.L.P. But inwardly a new

quality had emerged. In this fight less attention was focussed on personalities and more on principles. The issue at stake was not only Lang's leadership but the whole policy of reformism—the attitude to the united front, the struggle against war and fascism, the attitude to the Soviet Union, etc. A large number of A.L.P. supporters opposed to Lang were clearly aware of these issues and fought consciously to bring them more and more to the forefront as the struggle developed and the situation permitted. This was the new element in this conflict which differentiated it from past upheavals inside the Labor Party and placed it on a higher plane.

In two successive by-elections, Waverley and Hurstville, the Heffron Labor Party stood candidates against the official nominees of the Lang Party. The Heffron candidates were supported by the whole left-wing of the Labor movement, including the communists, and crushingly defeated the Langites. The majority of State Labor politicians who had sat on the fence and taken no part in the fight to oust Lang saw the writing on the wall. They realised that if they delayed much longer Lang would be isolated and defeated without their aid, and the subsequent reorganisation might deprive many of them of pre-selection, resulting in the loss of their seats. To circumvent this Lang was deposed by Caucus and Mckell stepped into his shoes. The first aim of the dissident movement was realised when Lang was removed from the leadership and differentiation now developed in the ranks of the dissenters. The whole body of parliamentarians were now satisfied and thought the movement had gone far enough; the A.L.P. should revert to its traditional policy of "hastening slowly" and, above all, avoiding any contact with the revolutionary section of the labor movement. And yet only through such contact and common action had it been possible to defeat Lang, only through a further development and strengthening of such unity was it possible to combat effectively fascism and war. A new right wing, centered in the parliamentary fraction came into existence in N.S.W. A new left wing, composed of those who had formed the core of the movement against Lang, crystallised around Messrs. Hughes and Evans, who had been elected to leading executive positions after the rout of Lang at the great unity conference between the Heffron "breakaway" party and the official A.L.P. This left wing, besides leading the struggle against Lang inside the A.L.P., had consistently adopted a progressive attitude on questions of national and international policy, which was at variance with the official policy of the Labor Party. They had stood for Aid for Spain, when the official policy was "non-intervention," they had stood for Aid for China when the official policy was "isolation," they had opposed Munich, when the official policy was "support Chamberlain," etc. They stood for the united front, whereas the official party was opposed to the united front. A climax was reached in 1940 when

the Annual Conference of the N.S.W. A.L.P. carried what came to be known as the "Hands Off Russia" resolution. The Federal Executive of the A.L.P., which had shown marked reluctance to intervene against Lang in N.S.W., acted with alacrity in this instance. They demanded that the resolution favouring friendly relations with the Soviet Union be expunged from the minutes of the Annual Conference. Shortly afterwards a special Federal Conference, dominated by Forgan Smith and Fallon, removed the Central Executive from office in N.S.W. and arbitrarily set up what was known as the McAlpine Executive. The deposed Executive re-convened the Annual Conference on August 17, 1940, and there was established the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, or State Labor Party as it came to be known, to distinguish it from the usurpers who appropriated the title, "Official Labor Party," sometimes known as the Federal Labor Party.

The Twelfth Congress of the Party met in Sydney in November, 1938, two months after Munich. It was the only political organisation in Australia which came out decisively against Chamberlain's shameful betrayal, not only of Czechoslovakia but of world peace. Two of the main questions dealt with at the Twelfth Conference were "The Organisation of an Australian People's Front Against Reaction" and "A Programme for Peace." The latter stated, "Australia needs defensive agreements with our great democratic neighbours in the Pacific—the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R.—and also China, Dutch East Indies and South American States and should strive to influence Empire policy along these lines. . . . The Government must pursue a consistent peace policy and unite with all countries supporting collective action for peace." The Congress demanded the removal of the U.A.P.-U.C.P. Government, which was pursuing a policy of appeasement, from office. It emphasised the need for a united front of the working class—Communist Party-Labor Party unity—as the core of a People's Front. The Congress also called for a stronger Communist Party and the doubling of its membership as a means of strengthening the Labor movement in preparation for the stern tasks ahead.

A terrific campaign against fascist aggression, against appeasement, and for collective security was waged by the Party following the Twelfth Congress. But the resistance of the reformist leaders to the united front could not be overcome in time. Similar obstacles in other countries prevented all the pressure of which the international working class is capable being brought to bear on the ruling classes and war between Britain and Germany became a fact in September, 1939, almost on the first anniversary of Munich which was to have brought "Peace for our time." At the outbreak of war the Central Committee, for a brief moment, made an incorrect appraisal of its character. The Party had developed such an intense campaign of

hatred for fascism and had agitated so long for decisive measures to restrain fascist aggression that it failed to note the imperialist motives which led to the Anglo-French declarations of war against Nazi Germany. At the same time there was a failure to understand fully the significance of the Soviet-German Pact of Non-Aggression. The Party statement called for support for the war against fascist Germany by the British and Australian Governments, while at the same time calling for a struggle against the appeaser Menzies and Chamberlain governments. However, this error was short-lived and the Party quickly orientated itself on a correct Leninist estimation and policy.

In the first phase of the war, the so-called "phoney war" period the Party policy aimed at preventing its spread. At the conclusion of the Polish campaign the Soviet Government associated itself with proposals for a peace conference. The Communist Party supported these proposals which offered a last minute chance of averting the tragedy of a world-wide conflict. The offer was, however, rejected by the British Government. Then came the invasion of France and the Low Countries, the war spread, as it was bound, and the Peace slogan was no longer applicable. The Party raised the slogan of a People's Government, which would sue for a People's Peace and, failing that, would organise a real People's War against fascism. A tremendous barrage of slander was directed against the Soviet Union after the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany was signed in August, 1939. This was combatted by the Communist Party, which pointed out that the refusal of the British and Polish governments to conclude a Pact of Mutual Aid with the Soviet, left the latter no alternative but to safeguard its own territory. Later, when the Polish government had fled before the German invaders, abandoning the people to their fate, and the Red Army reoccupied the former Russian provinces of Ukraine and White Russia, the slander campaign was intensified. The defensive war against Finland brought this campaign to its highest peak. Full preparations were made in Britain to send an "Expeditionary force" to the aid of the Whiteguard Mannerheim. The Communist Party came out against these plans for "switching the war." It proposed to the masses that the reactionary governments of Chamberlain and Menzies should be deposed and People's governments installed, it proposed that instead of seeking war with the Soviet, as were these governments, a friendly alliance should be concluded, in event of the fascists refusing to negotiate peace with a People's government, that a real People's War be conducted against them. There was never at any time on the part of the Communist Party any question of appeasement or capitulation to fascism, but always, both before and during the different phases of the war the consistent application of an anti-fascist policy.

During this period there was little to distinguish the top leaders of the Labor Party from the open representatives of capitalism. They

echoed all the vile anti-Soviet slanders and in many cases took the lead in this crusade. It was, for the time being, impossible to apply the united front tactic from above as well as from below and the Party concentrated on winning over the Labor Party supporters against the will of their own leaders. It only became possible to revert to the tactics of unity from above and below after June, 1941, when the character of the war changed.

In the meantime, in June, 1940, the Party was declared to be an unlawful association and was suppressed by the Menzies government. Throughout the major part of its existence the Communist Party lived under the threat of illegality. Prior to the depression the Bruce-Page government passed the Crimes Act Amendment Bill with the avowed objective of outlawing the Communist Party. Before this aim could be realised the Bruce government was unseated and the Scullin Labor government elected. When Scullin was defeated and the Labor renegade, Lyons, came into office the attacks on the Communist Party were renewed. Harold Devanny, who at that time was publisher of the "Workers' Weekly," was proceeded against by the Crown for allegedly soliciting funds for an "unlawful association," namely, the Communist Party. This was an attempt to establish the de facto illegality of the Party without any formal declaration. This Machiavellian effort failed. The Party mobilised the masses and a huge campaign was conducted resulting in the prosecution being dropped. A somewhat similar attempt to outlaw the Party by round about means was made in 1935 through linking the Party in a prosecution of the "Friends of the Soviet Union," a non-political cultural organisation which had itself initiated a legal action against the Government. This also failed. An undeclared and uneasy truce was then maintained by the Government, which, however, only waited a more favourable opportunity for renewing the offensive. The Menzies Government thought this opportunity had arrived during the war, when the anti-Soviet campaign was at its height and many people were confused by the distorted capitalist press versions of the Finnish war. This was a most difficult period for the Communist Party, which was called on not only to withstand a vicious ideological attack from all quarters, but also physical assaults on Party meetings and speakers. The Party defended itself and defended the Soviet Union. More than that, it placed itself at the head of the masses; it led the struggles of the miners, metal-workers and other sections of the working class for improved conditions. The ruling class saw that the Party could neither be cajoled nor intimidated into deserting its fundamental principles, and so, on June 15 it was proclaimed an unlawful association. Party offices, bookshops and printing establishments were raided, the homes of Party members were invaded and their libraries confiscated. No literary discrimination was shown by the raiders, the works of Shakes-

peare, Milton, Burns, Goethe, Shelley and Lawson were bundled into police and military trucks, cover to cover with those of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. If the Government honed bv this blow to banish the Communist Party it must have been disappointed.

The Party had anticipated reaction and prepared beforehand for the transition to new methods of work. Communist activity, far from decreasing became more widespread after June 15. The Prime Minister, Menzies, announced that more drastic measures would be taken to curb these activities. Two Party members, Thomas and Ratliff, who had previously served a term of imprisonment for communist work, were picked up and thrown into a concentration camp without charge or trial. The Central Committee aroused the Party and the labor movement against this fascist-like action of the Government. Thomas and Ratliff embarked on a hunger strike which focussed public attention to the case. The Sydney Trades and Labor Council called a one-day general strike demanding their release. In spite of the sabotage of certain reformist officials the strike was most successful. It shook the Menzies government, but not sufficienly to bring about its downfall or the release of the two political prisoners at that stage. The cowardly inactivity of the majority of labor politicians dammed back the pressure and helped save the face of the Menzies government. Besides the persecution of Ratliff and Thomas there were about fifty arrests in all throughout Australia. Western Australia suffered most. Here the Party was weakest and the State leadership, afflicted with "liberalism," hadn't taken the ideological and organisational steps advised by the Central Committee. In Western Australia also reformism played its most rotten part. Certain labor leaders acted as police informers in denouncing active communists. The fight against political persecution, intimidation and provocation steeled the ranks of the Party and led to a higher political development. The majority of members withstood the test well. There were relatively few deserters. Among those more prominent were Nelson, Lloyd Ross, Barrachi and Rawlings. The Party deemed itself well rid of such people and was thankful that the lesser crisis had revealed their true character. The Party press continued in circulation during the whole period of illegality. The "Tribune," printed illegally and much reduced in size, came out within a week or so after its suppression as a legal organ. It was followed soon after by the "Communist Review." Besides maintaining these weekly and monthly publications the Central Committee issued many leaflets and pamphlets, including, "Soviet Russia and the War," "The Coming War in the Pacific" (when Menzies and Co. were assuring Australia that there would be no war, that by appeasing Japan with wool and scrap-iron and closing the Burma road war would be averted), and "What is this Labor Party?" The circulation of the "Tribune" doubled and and that of the "Communist

Review" trebled while the Party was illegal. Oral propaganda was also maintained. Leading communists in the trade unions and other mass organisations still continued to put forward in public the Party point of view and were not deterred from so doing by the threats of the Government. The Party platform in the Sydney Domain was re-opened by Stan Moran in his own name. Party members stood as election candidates either as "Independents" or Socialists. No one was deceived by this legal fiction, least of all the Government who probably hesitated and refrained from going further along the path to fascism out of fear of the probable consequences. After all Britain and Australia were formally at war with fascism and there were limits to the abrogation of democratic rights beyond which even Menzies and Co. daren't venture. The political strike against the illegal detention of Ratliff and Thomas showed them that they were walking dangerously close to the edge of a precipice and that any added weight of political repression might result in an avalanche in which they and not the communists would be submerged.

G. THE PARTY AND THE WORKING CLASS IN THE PEOPLE'S WAR AGAINST FASCISM.

One week after the first anniversary of the illegality of the Communist Party, on June 22, 1941, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union and the character of the war began to change. Mr. Churchill at once announced that Britain would support the Soviet Union. From an imperialist war the struggle was transformed into a People's War of liberation against fascism.

The Party quickly reorientated itself and adjusted its policy to the new situation. It now declared its fullest support for the war which had become a just war. It called for the closest relations with and the fullest support for the Soviet Union. Mr. Churchill, on behalf of the British Government, concluded a Mutual Aid Pact with the Soviet which soon afterwards was supplemented by a 20 Years' Treaty of Alliance. The Dominions and the U.S.A. fully supported Mr. Churchill's policy. The great anti-fascist coalition for which the Soviet had strived and the communists had fought since the coming to power of Hitler was at last in the process of formation. Lenin once said that the path to Socialism was "not like the Nevsky Prospect" (a broad straight thoroughfare in Petrograd). Neither, it proved, was the path to international anti-fascist unity. A tortuous zig-zag course led to this objective. The march of the peoples towards this goal was marked by temporary reverses and transient severe defeats. It was reached ultimately under circumstances which could not have been foreseen, but it was reached, nevertheless, and soon showed its great worth by stemming the flood tide of fascist aggression and turning it back.

The Communist Party advanced a concrete policy for winning the war. In the forefront of its programme was the demand for the

opening of a second land front in Europe so that Britain and the Soviet might strike joint blows at their common enemy as the Alliance demanded they should. The Party called for the fullest strengthening of the armed forces and a maximum effort by the workers in industry to produce all the requirements of war. Under the Menzies Government the armed forces were poorly equipped and the welfare of the troops received no consideration. There was widespread dissatisfaction with pay, food and hygiene in camps, curtailment of leave privileges, etc. In some instances discontent took the form of sit down strikes among the troops. The Party drew attention to the grievances of the soldiers and campaigned for an improvement in their conditions. In industry, the employers revealed a strong tendency to put their sectional, profit making, interests first, while the workers were being called on to forego established conditions and accept lower living standards, allegedly in the interests of winning the war. Here also the Party came forward and led the workers in struggles against all attempts to increase profits under the guise of war needs.

When the character of the war changed it became possible to broaden the united front tactic to once again include those leaders of the A.L.P. who supported the Alliance with the Soviet Union. The Party sponsored a United Front proposal to the Federal Labor Party through a number of prominent left-wing trade union officials, who also proposed at the same time that Mr. Curtin should take over the Government from Menzies. These proposals were made in September, 1941, and although they were not accepted by the Labor Party they contributed to Curtin's decision to take office in October. Soon after the Party's United Front offer the first fruits of the victory over Langism in N.S.W. fell ripe. The Labor Party was returned with a record majority. Not without some lingering fear, Mr. Curtin took advantage of the next Parliamentary crisis to assume office in the Federal Parliament. By this time the war was no longer remote, In December Japan struck at Pearl Harbour. Soon Singapore had fallen, the Dutch East Indies were overrun, and the war had reached Australia's doorstep. The Labor Government acted energetically to put the country on a war footing. It recalled two Australian Divisions from the Middle East and sent them to New Guinea. Curtin appealed to America for planes and men. Industry was mobilised and large numbers transferred from less essential to more essential undertakings. The Defence Act was amended to permit the use of Militia Forces outside Australian territory. In all of these measures the Government was supported by the Communist Party which continued to campaign for the avoidance of industrial stoppages where possible and a maximum productive effort. Price fixing and profit control measures were also instituted by the Labor Government.

The reactionary trend in Australian politics, so pronounced under

the Menzies regime, was reversed under the Labor Government. Ratliff and Thomas were set free and the ban on the Communist Party lifted.

In the struggle for production the Communist Party had to fight strenuously against certain groups of reformists in the major industries who set out to sabotage the policy of the Party and the Curtin Government. These reformists who had spent their lives preaching compulsory arbitration, class peace and gradualism, now became transformed into "militant strike leaders," who created grave difficulties in important defence industries. The strikes fomented by these right-wingers only helped the most reactionary sections of the capitalist class who were striving to discredit the Labor Government and bring about a restoration of the U.A.P. to office. The "Rights" were assisted in their campaign of sabotage by the anarchistic, crude, "militants" who lacked political understanding, and consequently could not realise the gravity of the situation for the labor movement if fascism were not defeated. These outbursts, which were encouraged by sections of the reformists and anarchists, indicated that the Australian labor movement had not yet completely overcome spontaneity, that there were still large sections of the workers lacking in political consciousness. These sections were of course reinforced by the new recruits drawn into industry by wartime measures, while on the other hand many workers with accumulated political experience had gone into the armed forces. The Trotskyite counter revoluntionaries, whose chief aim is the defeat of the Allied nations, played a prominent part in this disruptive campaign. Had it not been for the active struggle waged by the Communists against all these elements there is no doubt that even more serious harm to the nation's war effort would have resulted.

The Party emerged from illegality with more members than it had in June, 1940, when it was suppressed. The raising of the ban resulted in a further rapid increase. At the end of 1943 the membership had reached 20,000, and the Party was recognised as a political force to be reckoned with in the affairs of the country.

In the Federal election campaign of 1943 the Party entered into a united front agreement with the State Labor Party in New South Wales. Unity was proposed to the Official Labor Party and again rejected. At the conclusion of the election campaign, which returned the Curtin Government with a record majority, the Executive of the State Labor Party proposed to the Communist Party that officials of both parties meet to discuss prospects of amalgamation. Terms were drawn up and submitted to the membership of both parties for discussion. They met with almost unanimous approval. Both parties held separate Conferences which ratified the proposals and finally in January, 1944, a democratically elected joint conference effected amalgamation. Besides adopting a programme of immediate

demands the joint conference decided to open a campaign to secure affiliation of the new Australian Communist Party with the Official A.L.P. The General Secretary, J. B. Miles, told Conference that "The A.L.P.'s policy now is nearer to that of the Communist Party than at any time in history. If affiliation were granted the Australian Communist Party members would abide by A.L.P. rules, while retaining the right to continue their own propaganda. . . . We must work so that the decision on this question is made not by the reactionaries but by the best A.L.P. elements—and they are in a majority."

The affiliation of the Communist Party to the Australian Labor Party under the circumstances set out by J. B. Miles would be a typically Australian way of solving the problem of unity. It would also pave the way for the creation of a single working class party based on sound socialist principles and organised in a new way so that these principles can be applied to the changing situation. Just how such a Party will come into existence is a matter for the future to determine. One thing is sure, and that is, that the trade unions will play a most important part. The Australian Labor movement arose out of trade unionism. The trade unions initiated the Australian Labor Party. At moments of crisis in the history of that Party the trade unions have come forward in an attempt to set things straight. It was the trade unions which formed the core of the movement against Conscription. It was the trade unions which tried to alter the course of the Labor Party in the first post-war period by insisting on the adoption of the Socialisation objective. It was the trade unions which formed the backbone of the struggle to oust Lang. The history of labor for the past fifty years has in a sense been a history of struggle on the part of the trade unions to compel the Labor Party, their own creation, to function in their own interests. These interests have not been clearly understood in the past owing to lack of socialist consciousness, and all past attempts to reform the Labor Party have failed. The interests of the working class are bound up with the struggle for socialism. To achieve socialism the working class needs a socialist party, a party of a new type. When Australian trade unionists realise this, great changes will be wrought in the Australian Labor Movement. With the defeat of world fascism and the coming of peace the working class will need to be not less but more united than ever. Tremendous tasks will confront Australia, as well as all other countries in the post-war period. Then the question will be decided. Back to the old, or forward to a new way of life. The Communist Party has set its course for a strong, free and independent Australia, leading eventually to Socialism, which expresses the aspirations of the majority of toiling people summed up in the past century of history of the Labor Movement.