

*Looking Backward:
Looking Forward..*

**REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST POLITICS
AGAINST TRADE UNION
AND PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS**

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FOREWORD

THIS PAMPHLET DEMANDS A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

It is well known that deep divisions have appeared in the world Communist movement. Marxism-Leninism is the science which guides the revolutionary Communist movement. We defend Marxism-Leninism and we defend what we regard as the originally correct Marxist-Leninist stand of the Communist Party of Australia. That stand has been betrayed by those whom we call modern revisionists. Revisionism is well known in the history of the revolutionary movement. At every critical turn it has made its appearance. It seeks to take the revolutionary soul out of Marxism-Leninism and to turn the working class into channels harmless to capitalism. It is a great weapon of the capitalist class. The purity of the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism is always under attack. But that purity must be fought for.

This pamphlet traces some of the roots of the present revisionist politics and capitalist ideological outlook of the now revisionist "Communists" in Australia.

We belonged to the Communist Party of Australia. It is not easy to recognise what was wrong with an ideological outlook and political views and practices which we have spent part of a lifetime upholding, and upholding with the desire to serve the revolutionary interests of the working class and exploited people of Australia.

Yet it is obvious that the present treacherous revisionist policy of the now revisionist Communist Party must have had its roots in weaknesses in its Marxist-Leninist outlook and practice; weaknesses undetected by us at the time, and accepted and practised by us for many years.

For the greater part of the lifetime of the now revisionist Communist Party, its work was positive. It played an extremely useful part in the development of the struggles and organisation of the Australian working class and people, but in looking back, the evidence of a limited Marxist-Leninist understanding is clear in much of its work. Its approach on some questions was completely wrong.

The denunciation of Marxism-Leninism, masked as a denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, was the signal for revisionists and right opportunists in Parties all over the world also to renounce Marxism-Leninism and to substitute for it, right opportunism and revisionism, which became the programme and platform for the now openly revisionist "Communist" Party in Australia.

The Communist Party of Australia turned into its opposite. Opportunism which was once the minor but persistent feature of the Communist Party became its dominant feature in 1961-62.

Those who stood out against betrayal of its former position ultimately cleansed the Communist ranks in Australia. The Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) came into being as the result of that cleansing. This was only after commencing the most serious efforts to recognise and reject those incorrect views which we had inherited from the former Communist Party and to strengthen those correct views which we had defended from betrayal by the now revisionist Communist Party.

This pamphlet is part of that difficult process.

We are helped in this by the negative example of the revisionists and by the positive example of international events. We are assisted in particular by the example of the upholding of Marxism-Leninism by the great Communist Party of China.

But the process of awakening is not an easy one. To embark upon the critically important task of breaking with the errors of the former Party ideologically, politically and organisationally, requires protracted struggle. To break politically is not so difficult for the disasters into which modern revisionism is leading the workers are not so difficult to see. That something different is needed is fairly obvious. But the problems of fundamentally altering our ideology and building not only a new organisation but an organisation on entirely different lines are far more difficult. Such tasks demand that for ourselves we honestly examine our past practice to enable us to recognise our mistakes.

Lenin said of political parties (and it is just as true of individuals): "The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of a party and how it fulfils in practice its obligations towards its class and towards the toiling masses. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyse the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the

means of correcting it – these are the signs of a serious party; this means the performance of its duties, this means educating and training the class, and subsequently, the masses.” (Lenin: Left Wing Communism, Little Lenin Edition, p. 40.)

Have we changed? It may be asserted against us that we have. No, fundamentally we have not changed. We have changed in that we now recognise as wrong some things which in the past we regarded as right. We believe as firmly as ever in the need for a revolutionary change of the social order, only our belief is in the process of becoming *more soundly scientific, more reliable and useful to the working class and working people*. By changing in this way, we have strengthened ourselves as Marxist-Leninists the better to carry on the splendid traditions of Communism in Australia now betrayed by the revisionists. We are the true inheritors of the pioneers of 1920 who first formed the Communist Party in Australia.

It is the former Communist Party which has changed, and changed fundamentally, from revolutionary theory and practice (however imperfect) to revisionist, reformist theory and practice.

It is these revisionist, reformist views which are attacked and criticised in this pamphlet. Because we share some responsibility for the past errors, our responsibility to correct them is all the heavier. Hence this pamphlet is part of that task. But we do not regard either the former Communist Party or the A.L.P. (which we also criticise) as a homogeneous body. We attack the theories and policies of these parties and not the members. We attack, criticise, the leaders because they crystallise and exemplify the policy, and a party must be judged by its policy and what class that policy serves.

We criticise our erstwhile colleagues for mistakes not only arising from the limited Marxist understanding they and we had, but above all we criticise them because they deserted the very cause of Communism they originally set out to serve.

It is a Marxist-Leninist duty to do just this. We make no apology for it. Historically, Marxism-Leninism developed and grew strong precisely in the struggle against rightwing ideas. Today it is again asserting itself against rightwing ideas. The champions of Marxism-Leninism have been refreshed. They are opposing and exposing the influences of the capitalist class which have accumulated to such a big degree in many of the Communist Parties.

The most important feature in our weakness was our failure sufficiently to study and apply materialist dialectics and to make materialist

dialectics a mass question. It is not difficult at all to make materialist dialectics a mass question. But it is vitally important. "The law of contradiction, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics." (Mao Tse-tung: On Contradiction, p. 1.) We must keep that firmly in mind in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the past, in seeing things in their movement and their development by the resolution of contradictions.

The struggle for socialism in Australia has a history in line with general principles revealed by the great thinkers of revolutionary socialism — Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung. In that struggle the Communist Party formed in Australia in October, 1920, despite all its weaknesses, played a big part. We cannot (except incidentally) within the scope of the present booklet go into the mechanism of capitalist exploitation nor the general principles of Marxist political economy. Rather we must proceed on the assumption that these are questions that already are understood. We set out here to examine and analyse some questions connected with the development of the working class movement in Australia and the position in that development of the trade unions, the Communist Party of Australia, now nominally headed by L. L. Sharkey (to which we will refer sometimes as the former Communist Party in contrast with the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)) and the Australian Labor Party.

We therefore offer the following to assist in clarifying some of the questions that face the Australian workers now and in the future.

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CHAPTER I

AUSTRALIA WAS SETTLED AS A PENAL COLONY by Britain in 1788. From that time Australia has gone through the development of six separate colonies — New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia. So-called self government was conferred by the British imperial parliament on the six separate colonies in the middle of last century.

This followed the development of free settlement and the beginnings of capitalism. The British imperialists had learned from their bitter experiences when they attempted to maintain the colonial bonds in North America. After the armed rebellion of Eureka in 1854, the British imperialists realised they must manœuvre to maintain their hold on the Australian colonies. Hence they conferred "self government." Despite self-government British imperialism continued to exploit the six separate colonies. The British imperialists invested money in them and imported (on terms favorable to themselves) the colonial raw materials, particularly wool. Trade unionism began to grow. In 1890, the great Maritime Strike took place

It demonstrated that the workingclass was growing — a necessary concomitant of capitalism. Federation of the six separate colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia was enacted by an Act of the British Parliament at the turn of the century. Australia evolved as a separate "dominion" within the British empire. Thus Australia arose and continues as part of the British empire. Today British imperial hold on Australia is being challenged by the new aspirant to world domination, U.S. imperialism. With British imperialist, U.S. imperialist and Australian native capitalist investment, capitalism has taken firm root. The workingclass has grown. The workingclass is by far the most important class in Australian society. It has the historic mission of freeing Australia from British and U.S. imperialism and of establishing its own power in Australia.

From the time of the original penal colonies, the Australian workers and working people have a splendid tradition of militant struggle against oppression. Highlights in Eureka and the 1890 Maritime Strike have already been mentioned. In the years of federation, the traditions of the workingclass have been greatly enriched by splendid struggles.

In the last several decades this tradition has been further enriched. One very important event was the establishment of the Communist Party of Australia in October, 1920. It began the challenge to the system of politics of the Australian Labor Party. That party arose out of the events

around the Maritime Strike. With the politics of these parties it is necessary to be very much concerned. The course the workingclass must follow to carry out its historic mission is a subject that must be closely studied. The science of Marxism-Leninism provides the key to that study.

Marxism-Leninism is a science which guides the workers and toiling people in their struggle for emancipation from capitalism. Marxism-Leninism has been obscured and pushed into the background by some who today call themselves Communists although Marxism-Leninism is the world outlook of Communism. In the very name of Marxism-Leninism some who call themselves Communists have put forward theories and practices which have nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism.

It is, therefore, necessary to restate some of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism and restore them to their rightful place.

Just because the trade unions occupy so important a place in the lives of Australian workers, special importance attaches to a Marxist-Leninist analysis of their position. Just because it seems to us that on this question, so important to Australian workers, those who now falsely call themselves Communists have gone wrong, it is necessary to start from the very beginning. That will require extensive quotation from the theoreticians of Marxism-Leninism, particularly from the great Russian revolutionary, Lenin. Other than that it sometimes makes a document tedious, we offer no apology, because the classics of Marxism-Leninism have been pushed on one side and their study eschewed by some so-called Marxist-Leninists. Part of the struggle to re-assert the supremacy of Marxism-Leninism lies in restoring the study of these classics to a foremost position in the Australian workingclass.

It will be necessary to refer extensively to those who falsely call themselves Communists and whom we will sometimes call revisionists. These people revise Marxism-Leninism, revise from it its revolutionary soul. To cover themselves they speak loudly about bringing Marxism up to date. They speak about creative Marxism. They speak derisively against those who, as they say, continually quote Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Really they condemn themselves by their own denunciations.

They do not want to be reminded of what Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin said because the very function of revisionism is to do what the capitalist class has failed to do, that is, bury the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

We too stand for creative Marxism. Stalin, paraphrasing Engels, said that Marxism is not a dogma, it is a guide to action. That is profoundly true. But when our revisionists speak of creative Marxism, they really mean complete rejection of Marxism.

To the workingclass and toiling people, Marxism-Leninism is life itself because it provides them with *the* weapon to free themselves from capitalism, from exploitation. Though fulfilment of that task may seem momentarily distant in Australia, nonetheless it is imperative to prepare for the ending of capitalism in Australia and continually to struggle to that end. It is necessary to be fully armed theoretically with an understanding of society because theory has immediate practical consequences. Moreover, we live in a period when capitalism has in fact been overthrown in vast areas of the world – in Russia, China, Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Cuba (the total number of socialist countries being 13) – and when the actual conditions in Asia, Africa, Latin America are crying out for it to be overthrown there now.

Though there is not at the present time in Australia a revolutionary situation, the fact naturally is that Australian capitalism and the Australian workingclass and toiling people do not exist in a vacuum. They exist in an actual world, a world which is in a process of acute change. The system of exploitation, of imperialism is daily being challenged. We live in the era of the transition from capitalism to socialism. No Australian is unaffected by that. Every Australian in one way or another is affected by it and must define his or her attitude to it. It affects us in taxation, in military operations in South East Asia, in wages, in houses, in education, in medical services, in legislation against democratic rights, in a thousand and one ways. It affects us in the so-called Australian-U.S. alliance because the U.S. imperialists are the main oppressors of the people. They oppress the colonial people and the people in the subordinate capitalist countries such as Australia. They are the main champions and force for maintaining capitalism.

Marxism-Leninism throws a clear light on all these problems. The capitalist class from the very beginning of Marxism in the middle of last century has tried to strangle Marxism by every means in its power, by silence, by trying to ignore it; when that failed, by hiring many "learned" people to refute it, by persecuting, killing or imprisoning its adherents. Today none of those "skills" has been lost. But one of the chief weapons of the capitalist class has always been political diversion in the very name of Marxism-Leninism. This was the role of Trotsky and those who adhered and adhere to his views. They proclaimed them-

selves Marxist-Leninists and in the name of Marxism-Leninism undermined Marxism-Leninism. However, Trotskyism as a political trend has received very many severe blows. It can no longer do the job of political diversion in the present period of the collapse and overthrow of imperialism.

The imperialists are absolutely frantic to save their system. They rush hither and thither with their armed forces all over the world trying to stamp out revolts of the people. An essential complement of this is political diversion in the very name of Communism and Marxism-Leninism. Lenin said: "Opportunism can be expressed in the terms of any kind of doctrine, *including that of Marxism.*" (Lenin: On Britain, p. 102 — emphasis his.)

That is the role of the modern revisionists headed until recently on a world scale by Khrushchov and carried out in Australia by the former Communist Party of Australia which is really under the domination of the Aarons revisionist clique.

Today it is possible to see the actual collaboration of these people with the U.S. imperialists. Let us take a few examples: Khrushchov supported the attempted use of U.N. (really U.S.) "inspection" in Cuba in 1962 (a proposition vital to U.S. imperialism), Khrushchov supported the Indian ruling class backed by the U.S. imperialists in their aggression against socialist China. By his desire to disengage the Soviet Union from the Chairmanship of the Geneva Commission, Khrushchov supported U.S. military operations against Vietnam.

Khrushchov supported the U.S. policy to destroy the socialist German Democratic Republic and strengthen the German monopoly capitalists with their plans for the restoration of German military might. In other words, the modern revisionists serve the needs of U.S. imperialism in its plans for world domination. These plans include Australia, where US. investment, penetration and political domination have reached an all-time high.

Hence clarity on what is going on is critical for the Australian working people. Clarity demands that Australians be armed with Marxism-Leninism, for it alone provides the answers and indicates the way forward. Certainly we would urge the Australian workers to read Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung and the writings of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). These writings are not too advanced, too difficult, as the revisionists say. The workers are not too backward, too ignorant. They do not have the contempt for

theory of which the revisionists are so fond of speaking. On the contrary, it is the revisionists who fear to urge the study of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin just because such a study is imperative in the struggle to end capitalism. The revisionists do not themselves want to struggle to end capitalism. They want to prevent everyone else from struggling to end capitalism. They have a contempt for the workers, for the people.

In speaking of the fact that socialist ideas came from outside the workingclass, Lenin said: "Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the only choice is — either bourgeois or socialist ideology" and he added a footnote: "This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians . . . in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that workingmen *may succeed in this more often*, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of 'literature for workers' but that they learn to an increasing degree to master *general literature*. It would be even truer to say 'are not confined', instead of 'do not confine themselves' because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough 'for workers' to be told a few things about factory conditions and have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known." (Lenin: What is to be Done. Selected Works, 3 Volume Edition, 1960, Vol. 1, p. 156-7.)

The modern revisionists in Australia today systematically attempt to confine the workers to being told a few things that they already know and never seek to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers. If you read their publications (which you should), Tribune, Guardian, Communist Review, and particularly the writings of L. Aarons, you will see this demonstrated.

How then do the trade unions fit into all this? Opposition to capitalism first took the form of machine breaking, because the machine was seen as the thing which brought ruin to the craftsmen. Machine breaking was blind revolt. The adherents of machine breaking failed to see that machines had come to stay and that a new form of society, capitalism, was destined to occupy a whole historical stage. When machines had established themselves, when capitalism was entrenched,

gradually the workers learned that they had a common interest against the employer. Their consciousness developed to organising strikes against the appalling conditions imposed upon them. But their strikes were strikes within the confines of capitalism. They never challenged the capitalist system itself. They raised as demands only the things which immediately affected them — wages, hours, conditions. Lenin said: “*There could not have been Social Democratic (read Communist) consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without.*”

“The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. that conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied class, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia.” (What is to be Done, Selected Works, 3 Volume Edition, Vol. 3, pp. 148-149.)

The crux of this thought is of critical importance to Australian workers today. What is the way forward: is the way forward to confine the workers to trade unionism, to trade union struggles, or is it to work to lift the consciousness of the workers to the level of Communist (scientific socialist) consciousness, and build a revolutionary scientific socialist party of the workingclass capable of leading the whole struggle against capitalism? To do the former is to perpetuate capitalism: to do the latter is to prepare for the overthrow of capitalism. It is our contention that the modern revisionists in Australia seek to confine the workers to trade unionism, to trade union politics, and thus to do something which does not really challenge capitalism as a social system.

Australian trade unions date back to the first half of last century. In the early stages, they reflected the weakness of the development of Australian capitalism, i.e. without capitalism there are no workers. As we have said, Australia commenced as a penal colony, which provided no basis for trade unions. But particularly after the gold rushes had subsided and capital accumulated and an embryonic working class was available to be exploited, capitalism developed in Australia. The British capitalists exported capital to their colony Australia. Employers exploited workers. Trade unions got greater stability. Strikes occurred. In 1890, the Maritime Strike took place. It was the biggest strike in the

history of Australia up to that time. It was defeated. We shall in a moment turn back to some of its consequences.

The history of the development of trade unions in Australia was a history of resistance by the capitalist class (just as it had been in Britain) to the very formation of trade unions. All sorts of obstacles, including repressive legislation, were placed in their way. The capitalists demanded the right to exploit the individual worker to the full. They worked hard to prevent the workers from combining because the capitalists understood that the organisation of the workers gave the workers far greater strength. Hence many bitter struggles had to be waged before the capitalists recognised at all the right of the workers to organise. The workers only held that right by virtue of their strength. It was a question of class against class. When the capitalist class finally acknowledged the fact of workers' organisation, it sought at all times to make that fact depend upon its own conditions and terms and to turn it to its own advantage. It has been pointed out that in England at a certain stage of the development of capitalism, it paid the capitalists to have trade union organisation in a given industry because thereby the capitalists were saved from competition amongst themselves in the hiring of labour power, i.e. it was an advantage to capitalist A to know that he was paying the same wages as capitalist B and not being undercut in this respect by capitalist B.

In Australia in the 1870's and 1880's, there was an expansion of trade unionism. Naturally enough it was influenced by the course of development that had been followed by the English trade unions. The workers, for the most part, were emigrants from England. But certainly no conception arose from the trade unions to attack the social system itself. The workers had forced on them only the understanding that in a given factory or given trade they were the victims of low wages, long hours, bad conditions at the hands of the employers and that by combining they had more chance of alleviating their lot than by acting individually. Occasionally they directly or indirectly supported a member of parliament to pursue in parliament the workers' demands.

Because of their conditions of life — lack of education, long and arduous work, etc. — the workers could not of themselves subject all history and all society to searching analysis. This was left, as Lenin said, to the educated representatives of the propertied classes, Marx and Engels, who had the education and the time to survey the whole of history and society and to reveal that its development had taken place according to definite social laws which operated all the time. These laws

showed that society must develop into socialism and Communism and that the workingclass was precisely the class which had the historical mission to achieve socialism and thereby free all toiling people.

Accordingly, left to themselves the workers could never escape from capitalism. Alone, the ideas they generated must necessarily have been confined to trade union demands, i.e. better terms from the capitalist within the bounds of capitalism. Thus the ideology, the politics of the workers, strange though it may seem, were bourgeois, capitalist, ideology and politics, i.e. they were based on an acceptance of capitalism. They could not get beyond capitalism. Their struggle was a desperate struggle for existence, to hold a job, and in that job to get the best conditions. Trade unions, therefore, of themselves never did generate socialist politics, and today that holds good. A study of Australian trade union and workingclass history shows it to be true.

The struggle to improve wages, to improve conditions, to resist victimisation, though vitally important, does not of itself challenge capitalism and does not of itself in any way strengthen the socialist consciousness of the working class. On the contrary, unless it is handled in a particular way, it can strengthen trade union politics, i.e. the acceptance of capitalism by the workingclass. Though it always fights to resist workingclass demands, the capitalist class is never really threatened by trade union politics because they never challenge the capitalist system itself. By trade union politics we mean the preoccupation imposed by the conditions of capitalism on the trade unions to confine themselves to trade union demands. Insofar as the trade union politics spontaneously generated by the workingclass have been systematised as bourgeois politics (reformism), this has been done by the educated representatives of the propertied classes.

One result of the Maritime Strike of 1890 was to give currency to the idea that only by securing widespread representation in parliament could the workers achieve their trade union demands. It was said the forces of the State had been used to defeat the strikers and success could not be achieved unless the workers secured their own representatives in parliament.

By 1890, there had been brought to the workingclass of the world, social ideas and theories of various kinds. Social theoreticians had arisen from the capitalist class. Marx and Engels advanced the ideas of scientific socialism; utopian (unscientific, dreamlike) socialist ideas had emerged earlier from such people as Robert Owen and the Frenchmen St. Simon and Fourier; the Englishman William Morris put forward

socialist ideas; the German Duhring; Henry George and Edward Bellamy exercised considerable influence, and many others. Those ideas, and mixtures of them, attracted and influenced the advanced workers. But the development of capitalism in Australia by 1890 did not provide the objective basis upon which Marx and Engels' ideas of scientific socialism could flourish.

The far more limited idea of workingclass representation in parliament did have soil upon which to flourish. As we have said, Australian workingclass representation in parliament was to be to achieve *trade union demands*, i.e. it was strictly within the confines of capitalism itself. To labour the point a little more: the aim of securing workingclass representation in parliament accepted the existence and permanence of capitalism. It was again bourgeois capitalist ideology and politics. Moreover, parliament itself was and is an institution of capitalism. It was and is the possession of the capitalist class. One of the very points of seeking representation in parliament was because it was said, and correctly, that parliament was full of representatives of the capitalist class and what hope did the workers have when the laws were made by legislators who were capitalists.

Thus the workers in the years immediately following 1890 sought representation in a bourgeois institution, i.e. parliament. They wanted to use the bourgeois parliament to enact measures that would satisfy the workers' demands to improve their own lot. To put it plainly, the workers sought to achieve demands which never challenged capitalism and sought to do so through a capitalist institution, namely parliament.

Thus they accepted capitalism in two ways, (1) their demands accepted the social system of capitalism, (2) their method of achieving them accepted the social institution of capitalism — parliament. This is not a reproach of the workingclass at all. It is explained by its then immaturity and demonstrates that of itself the workingclass cannot generate a scientific socialist consciousness. It shows further that at that stage of Australian capitalist development scientific socialist ideas were largely unknown. All this has influenced the subsequent history of the Australian workingclass.

It was against this background that the Australian Labor Party, which has always been very closely linked with the trade unions, arose. The idea was that one of the big functions of the Labor Party in the parliament would be to enact legislation to give effect to trade union demands. It was a political party therefore which historically accepted demands which did not in any way challenge capitalism and which

accepted the capitalist parliamentary institution as the institution through which to gain the demands. Nevertheless it was a considerable historical step forward, for it marked the beginning of the struggle for the political independence of the workingclass.

Australian capitalism developed throughout the latter half of the 19th century. The number of workers correspondingly increased. Australian Federation in 1901 was the product of the development of capitalism. The six separate colonies had by the end of the 19th century outlived their usefulness and were constituting a barrier on the further development of capitalism in Australia. Hence Federation.

Because Australia was a British colony, federation could only be granted by legislation by the British Parliament. But it was a hesitant federation with a constitution full of contradictions. These reflected the conflicting interests of the various groups of British (and the few Australian) capitalists — those whose interest lay in the development and exploitation of Australia as a whole and those whose vested interests lay in separate states. Between them there were many other sectional interests. The workers were divided, influenced by sectional considerations. Many Australian trade unions today reflect this in the weakness of their federal structures.

In the first 20 years of federation, the High Court, as interpreter of the constitution, was careful to safeguard the separate interests vested in the separate states (the original six colonies) and careful to put a restraining hand on the development of centralism. It enunciated legal doctrines that were in conformity with these economic and social considerations.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM, and with it the workingclass, was inexorable. World War I saw an enormous development of industry (e.g. the establishment in 1915 of an iron and steel industry) and a concentration and centralisation of capital in Australia. Likewise it saw a great development of trade unionism.

The High Court accorded with the new position of the Commonwealth as a central governmental authority which was much more powerful after World War I by reason of the changes just mentioned. High Court decisions of 1920 expressed a new legal doctrine which reflected the new power of the Commonwealth Government.

Now what of the politics and demands of the trade unions? After 1890, the demands of the trade unions continued to be demands within the framework of capitalism made on the employer and the capitalist states. The trade unions' parliamentary activity was largely lobbying with members of the parliamentary parties. The movement towards parliamentary representation through what became the Australian Labor Party was greatly intensified.

At no stage did the demands go beyond reforms to be achieved within capitalism. Of course, the capitalists fought bitterly to make the minimum concessions. They vigorously resisted strikes and poured forth abuse and warnings of disaster if this or that gain were made by the workers. Thus one may say that until the end of World War I very little had been done in Australia, except by Tom Mann's Marxist propaganda (when Mann visited Australia in the pre-World War period) to change the situation created by what is a law of capitalism: namely, that the workers by themselves can never generate anything more than trade union consciousness (based upon an acceptance of capitalism). However, the idea had been implanted in the workingclass, and developed, of seeking parliamentary representation.

This itself was an important development for it reflected, even though in a primitive and confused form, a recognition of the class oppression of the capitalist state machine. Essentially however it never went beyond the confines of capitalism. It was a certain historical step forward but contained within itself its own dangers. If the workers devoted their attention exclusively to demands that accepted capitalism as permanent, and accepted capitalist institutions as the means to realise those demands, then there were the means for their continual enslavement. They could never get beyond capitalism.

To carry the argument further, if they were to accept parliament as the institution to carry through the reforms, then they were perpetuating the illusion that parliament is a democratic institution to carry out the will of the people rather than what it really is. Parliament is an instrument for the deception of the people and provides them with what Marx said was the opportunity to choose once every few years "which member of the ruling class will misrepresent the people in parliament." The more farsighted capitalists and their theoreticians, though they may have resisted this or that demand, could see advantages in this very development. From their standpoint, what had happened? The workingclass had developed trade unions: this had proved impossible to prevent; hence what to do — make the best of it — resist what you can — concede what you are compelled to concede and as to parliament, well after all, so long as we own the parliament, as we do, it does no harm to allow the workingclass at least to appear to be represented: it can even be a great advantage because it spreads illusions that parliament is not really our institution but is really a people's institution. The educated representatives of the propertied classes who emerged to perpetuate capitalism, to advance ideas in defence of capitalism, were not slow to see this and not slow to develop "Labour" theoreticians to expound appropriate ideas amongst the workingclass.

Therefore, like all other workingclasses, the Australian workingclass by its own efforts developed only trade union consciousness. Moreover, it was a workingclass largely immigrant in origin, composed of English migrants. As late as 1913, Lenin said:

"Australia is a young British colony. Capitalism in Australia is still quite young. The country is only just beginning to take shape as an independent state. The workers, for the most part, are emigrants from England. They left England at the time when liberal labour politics held almost unchallenged sway there and when the masses of the English workers were *liberals*. Even up till now the majority of the skilled factory workers in England are liberals and semi-liberals. This is the result of the exceptionally favourable monopolist position England occupied in the second half of the last century." (Lenin: "In Australia.")

With the assistance of ideas from the outside (that is, from the ruling class), the Australian workingclass developed a parliamentary party to give expression to trade union politics. Therefore the Labor Party was born as a capitalist party and it served capitalist interests extending beyond the mere trade union demands of many of its founders. The workingclass by its own consciousness could not and did not