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Labor's Case Against War and Fascism



Issued by the Labor Anti-War Committee,
representing the Melbourne Trades Hall
Council, and the Australian Labor Party,
Victorian Division

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*(Issued by
the Labor Anti-War
Committee, Melbourne)*

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FOREWORD

This brochure, "Labor's Case Against War," has been issued by the Labor Anti-War Committee, representing the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the Australian Labor Party. It includes the policy against war which has been adopted by both organisations.

The brochure, of course, is not the last word on the all-important subject of war. Admittedly, much more remains to be said, but it is claimed by the Labor Anti-War Committee that sufficient has been said to make the position of organised Labor clear. It is opposed to war and will take no part in it, except in case it became necessary to defend Australia within her own shores.

LABOR'S CASE AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM

Principles and Policy Explained

LABOR AND WAR

In policy and in practice the Australian Labor Movement is opposed to War. Labor is anti-militarist, opposes the wastage and threats of continued armaments, constantly strives for Peace, and consistently proclaims for the application of science to the social betterment of the entire people, as against the application of science to purposes of death and destruction in the interests of an exploiting minority of capitalists.

Herein the Labor Movement demonstrates to all humane and reasoning people that it is based on right principles, that its ethic is that of real civilisation and true Christianity, and that in the attainment of its ideals lies the only guarantee against war, and the only hope of security and progress for the great masses of the people.

It is a damning indictment of the existing social system that only 20 years after the outbreak of the most catastrophic war in history, the Australian Labor Movement once again is compelled to call upon the Australian people to prevent a recurrence, on an infinitely more terrible scale, of the great tragedy of 1914-1918.

REMEMBER THE LAST WAR

Lessons of the World War of 1914-18, written in the blood and tears of millions, are still fresh in the minds of Australians. We have learned, in general suffering and national loss, the bitter meaning of war, its sordid realities, its calamitous results. When Capitalism embroiled Australia in the last war, no artifice was spared to convince the Australian people that the war was a war in defence of all that is noblest in man, a war in defence of civilisation itself. Yet to-day, although the last war is cynically admitted by the very people who provoked it to have been a sordid slaughter for profitable markets, we are told that we must prepare for even greater slaughter to come.

In flesh and blood Australia paid for the last war with 60,000 slain, 82,000 wounded, and 87,000 sick and injured

and the human wreckage of the last war is still filling our hospitals before they make the final sacrifice. Each year brings a decrease in the army of shell-torn, gas-tortured men, whose epic heroism on Gallipoli and in Flanders inspired the world 20 years ago, and who to-day are driven to destitution and death by callous Governments.

LABOR DEFEATED CONSCRIPTION

This terrible toll of human life may well have been trebled if the Australian Labor Movement had not asserted its authority and power on behalf of the Australian people, and prevented the wholesale conscription of our manhood by the British and Australian capitalists. It was Organised Labor then which fought fearlessly against the merciless tyranny of wealth and power which sought to drive Australia's manhood into a nameless grave.

It is Organised Labor to-day which calls upon the people to rally in their thousands to the cause of Labor, to use their united might to prevent a catastrophe which threatens to engulf civilisation itself in a welter of blood and ruin.

"STOP THE NEXT WAR"

In the next war everywhere will be "The Front."

It will no longer be the armed forces who will kill and be killed.

Two further decades of invention have placed at the murderous disposal of the Capitalists and the Fascists a diabolical machinery of warfare, which we are informed will be used against civil populations without discrimination. The hub of this machinery, which is international in its ramifications, is the Imperial Chemical Industries, a gigantic £75 millions combine, founded and controlled by British capital, and closely connected with the greatest armaments firms in the world. The chemical warfare of the future will mean that aeroplanes will rain explosives and incendiary bombs; lethal gases and disease germs down upon defenceless cities, and millions of men, women and children will perish agonisingly beneath the hall of death.

It is against this frightful carnage that Organised Labor raises its powerful voice. It is against the present social system which conceives such horrors that Organised Labor opposes its entire strength, and pledges itself to work for the abolition of Capitalism and war. It is to this great cause that the Victorian Labor and Trade Union Movement calls the people of Australia and makes the following Declaration against War:—

LABOR'S DECLARATION AGAINST WAR

"The Political and Industrial Labor Movement of Victoria views with grave concern the imminence of another capitalist war, as the inevitable outcome of—(1) The struggle for markets amongst competing capitalist nations. (2) The development of nationalist economy and Fascism, which indicates both the economic drive towards war and a tremendous increase in the power of the Governments based on military dictatorships to make war; and (3) International hostility engendered by the failure of the capitalist system and the success of a socialistically planned economy in the U.S.S.R.

"The Labor Movement views with alarm the failure of the League of Nations to maintain world peace, and the failure of the Disarmament Conference to prevent world re-armaments. Labor condemns in particular the expenditure in war preparations of millions of pounds by the present Federal Government of Australia, while refusing to relieve the terrible distress and impoverishment of thousands of our unemployed workers.

"We declare that the imminence of another world war is directly attributable to the private monopoly ownership of the means of production and the struggle for profits. Such being the case, capitalist wars, which are fought to decide which nations or groups of capitalists shall exploit the greatest number of workers, **CAN ONLY BE ENDED BY THE COMPLETE ABOLITION OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMON OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION.** Pending such change, the extent to which Governments may prepare for and engage in war is determined directly by the will and power of Organised Labor and the people as a whole to maintain peace."

LABOR'S PLATFORM AGAINST WAR

Labor has not limited itself to a Declaration against War and Fascism. It has laid down a definite platform against War and Fascism, upon which every section of the community may unite and stand solidly, shoulder to shoulder, in the cause of Peace and Progress. Labor's platform is directed against capitalist wars throughout the world; therefore the first section of it is international in character and deals with Labor's proposals for effective Australian opposition to all such wars. Labor's international policy states that propaganda against war shall stress the following vital points:—

"(1) The economic cause of war and the fact that its effectual abolition can only be achieved by the establish-

ment of Socialism or the common ownership of the means of production.

"(2) The military significance of Fascism, which overthrows Parliamentary control by force, facilitates capitalist wars and provokes civil war.

"(3) Opposition to war which threatens the national right of self-determination and Socialism in any country.

"(4) The severance of political relations with nations engaged in capitalist war, and an embargo on the import or export of war materials to and from Australia.

"(5) The promotion of fraternal relationships with any country which stands as a force for world peace.

"(6) Industrial support of the Australian workers for the workers of any nation who are resisting capitalist war."

AGAINST IMPERIALISM

It will be seen that Labor stands uncompromisingly for the rights of minorities, for the independence of small and weak nationalities, and against ruthless exploitation by the great and powerful nations. Labor regards with horror the barbarous military suppression of the Chinese people, by the British, American, European, and Japanese capitalists, and asserts the right of the Chinese people to work out their own destiny in their own way. The Labor Movement similarly is opposed to the ruthless military suppression of the Indian people by British Capitalism, and declares its sympathy with the Indian people in their struggle for the right to govern their own country. Labor declares its sympathy with the Irish nation in its long struggle for independence and freedom, and with those South American peoples who are to-day being suppressed and exploited by the capitalist oligarchy in control of the U.S.A. Labor's national policy against war therefore asserts uncompromisingly the right of the Australian people to decide their own destiny, free from the military suppression or political domination of any Imperialist Power, and the right of the Australian people to refuse to participate in another war for profits, such as the last war. Labor calls upon the Australian people to support whole-heartedly the following policy:—

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE

"The adequate defence of Australia is affirmed in its obvious meaning that the defence of Australia means resistance to actual attack upon Australia. LABOR

RECOGNISES THAT ALL PAST IMPERIALIST WARS HAVE BEEN EXCUSED AS WARS OF DEFENCE, AND DECLARES THAT IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL PROVISION BE MADE BY AUSTRALIA FOR MILITARY ACTION OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA OR FOR CO-OPERATION OF ANY KIND IN ANY OVERSEAS WAR. This policy of defence is not to be advocated without directing the people's attention to the fact that if such defence became necessary, it would be the defence of an oppressed nationality against predatory Imperialism, and would be an historic step in the fight for Socialism both in this country and in that of the oppressor nation.

ARMAMENTS

"(a) Cancellation of war debts. (b) Private production of armaments to be abolished; and (c) Progressive disarmaments as the social liberation of the Australian workers may dictate.

MILITARY TRAINING

"(a) Opposition to compulsory military training or conscription. (b) Opposition to the formation of all extra-State forces, having for their object the denial of the democratic rights of the people as at present constituted; and (c) No utilisation of, no interference by, military forces in industrial disputes.

REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION

"Opposition to all repressive legislation such as the Crimes Act, Disloyal Organisations Bill, and similar Acts, calculated to strengthen the power of Governments to engage in military preparations and war, by depriving the people of their democratic rights."

INDUSTRIAL ACTION L.O.W. SANCTIONS

"To urge on all workers the necessity of refusing (a) To produce goods to be utilised in the event of a capitalist war being declared. (b) To transport such goods in the event of capitalist war being declared; and (c) To urge on the people the necessity for fighting by every means in their power for the removal of any Government engaged in capitalist war."

CAPITALISM PREPARES FOR WAR

In placing the foregoing platform against war before the Australian people, the ideals and principles of Labor stand vindicated by two decades of bloodshed and poverty unparalleled in world history, and the policy of Labor

stands forth to-day as the only policy by which the people may hope to prevent a Destructive War, and press forward to a Constructive Peace. The capitalist social system has outlived its usefulness and can no longer continue without the aid of Fascist brutality and wholesale death and destruction.

Already Capitalism has reached the stage where millions of tons of food are destroyed annually, because it cannot be sold at a profit, although millions of people throughout the world are suffering starvation and want.

It is but another step to the destruction of millions of human lives, in order that financiers may find a profitable investment for their wealth. Thirteen millions of men perished in the last war, and 16 millions were wounded, of whom 5½ millions were incapacitated for life.

This ghastly roll call of death and disease has been regularly increased during the past two decades by the "small" wars which have been conducted by Imperialist nations throughout the world, until we stand once again on the threshold of a carnage which threatens to destroy civilisation itself and throw humanity back into barbarism.

All the nations combined—some 60 odd—now spend yearly £1,500,000,000 on armaments. Of this sum, the British Empire alone spends some £200,000,000 a year. Australia, which has already paid in money £794,000,000 for the last war, is now being drawn closer into the plans of British Capitalism for the next war.

Millions are being devoted by the Nationalist Governments to the complete reorganisation of the Australian military apparatus, the reorganisation of the air force, and the manufacture of arms and munitions on a scale never before equalled in time of peace.

Simultaneously with these preparations the Nationalist Governments are placing Fascist legislation on the statute books which will make it a crime for any person to oppose the implication of Australia in the great massacre which looms ever nearer.

LABOR'S CALL TO ACTION

It is to meet this grave situation, then, that the Labor Movement calls upon the people of Australia to unite solidly against war. For the accomplishment of this great purpose the Victorian Labor Movement has organised a Labor Anti-War Committee, to engage in an intensive educational campaign, and to organise the struggle.

The Labor Anti-War Committee has been empowered to secure the active assistance of unions, A.L.P. branches, and other representative organisations concerned, for the purpose of appointing honorary representatives in shops, factories, municipalities, and Parliament, who shall assist in a State-wide campaign against war.

The Labor Anti-War Committee has been empowered to solicit the co-operation of the Labor Movement in other States for the promotion of national organisation against war, and to solicit financial aid from all organisations concerned for the prosecution of its activities.

The campaign against war will be conducted by means of mass meetings, illustrated lectures, radio, press propaganda, pamphlets, and Parliament.

ORGANISE TO END WAR

As the lives, liberties and security of all citizens are vitally concerned, all men and women opposed to war and Fascism—and these constitute an undoubted majority—are urged to assist the Labor Anti-War Committee by every means in their power.

Money is needed for propaganda purposes. Those who do not feel themselves qualified, or who for other reasons cannot take an active part in this most commendable of all public movements, can assist by financial contributions. No civic duty is of greater urgency; no better form of insurance exists. To women particularly the movement appeals. They are called upon, for the sake of their dearest ties and associations, and in the sacred name of motherhood, to enter a struggle that is already being strengthened and encouraged by their support all over the world. Youth—the principal sufferer in the last terrible conflict—is urged to give the Labor Anti-War Committee its best energies, its loyal assistance.

Labor representatives in Parliament, and the Political and Industrial Labor Movement as a whole, must engage immediately in the active struggle against war, and unite the great mass of the people in defence of International Peace, as an indispensable step towards the social security and progress which is Labor's great objective.

TEN REASONS

Why YOU Should

Join a Branch of the Australian Labor Party

1. The Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) is the Workers' recognised Political Organisation.
2. It is the only Party with a definite political programme designed to protect the people from exploitation.
3. Control of the Political Machine by the enemy of Labor has meant the cruel oppression of the masses for centuries.
4. Bitter experience has convinced thinkers in the Labor Movement that, if economic freedom is to be won, Political action is as essential as Industrial action.
5. Political Organisation is therefore necessary, and everyone should take part in the good work.
6. A worker who refuses to join a Union, yet accepts the benefits it wins, is despised. Is it not equally unfair to participate in the advantages that come from Political activities without assisting the Political Organisation?
7. All, then, should share the work and responsibilities as well as the benefits.
8. Every member has a voice in framing the policy and determining who shall represent Labor in all governing bodies.
9. Those who stand aloof and criticise do not help, but often hinder.
10. Fellow-workers, if you would be real genuine Laborites, link up with your mates politically and industrially.

Become a Member of the Local Branch
NOW!

Membership Subscription: Male Ticket, 2/-
Women and Juveniles Ticket, 1/- per annum

D. L. McNAMARA,

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