

18th CONGRESS, APRIL, 1958.

● **Farmers & Workers  
Together for a  
Better Life**

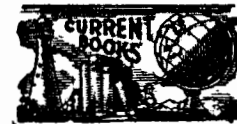
Agrarian Programme of the  
Communist Party of Australia.

*Price: One Shilling*

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**FARMERS AND WORKERS  
TOGETHER FOR A  
BETTER LIFE**

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of Australia.



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## Foreword

*The bringing up to date and republishing of the Communist Party's farming program marks a considerable step forward for the progressive movement.*

*Today there is a new situation, new conditions both within our country and in the international sphere as well.*

*That is why a new program was needed, one that would meet the new demands of the post-war world.*

*Necessarily, our basic aims in regard to a worker-farmer alliance, in the common struggle against the big industrial monopolies as well as the big land monopolists, remain unchanged.*

*This program is issued at a moment of economic instability, menacing to the workers and farmers alike.*

*Farm incomes are falling at an alarming rate. Markets are becoming more restricted. At the same time the workers' real wages are falling and the threat of mass unemployment raises its ugly head.*

*The labors of the industrial workers and the farmers have built our country. It is they who have produced everything we have.*

*Without their skill and toil there would be nothing.*

*Yet all sorts of parasitical exploiters have battered upon their labor, robbing them of the fruits of their toil.*

*The aim of this program is not to replace the Communist Party's National Program but to be an extension of the National Program into the special field of agriculture.*

*It indicates the common basic interests of the two great producing classes and the consequent need for them to act in unison at all times in order to protect their living standards and, finally, to emancipate themselves, by united effort, from all forms of exploitation.*

*The worker-farmer alliance would constitute an invincible force. It represents the majority of the people. It could determine the fate of governments and mould policy of the country in the interests of those who toil to make Australia great and prosperous.*

*That is why we appeal to the worker and the farmer to march hand in hand in unity towards a better and brighter future.*

**L. L. SHARKEY,**

*General Secretary.*

## **Australia Should Be A Land Of Abundance For All Workers And Farmers Alike**

The worst effects of the world agrarian crisis lifted from Australian agriculture early in the second World War.

Then followed a period of good markets and seasons for farm products. During this period a substantial advance was achieved in farm mechanisation and technology.

This led to an increase in production in most farm industries and to further entrenchment of monopoly and big business interests.

The period of good markets and prices for farm produce has passed and again many farmers are confronted with financial difficulties arising from excessive farm overhead, low net returns and unstable markets, while many workers and their families earn insufficient to buy all the bread, meat, eggs, butter, cheese, fruit, vegetables and clothing they need to ensure a proper standard of life.

The farmer's problem of reducing his costs and finding a stable and profitable market for his produce is linked with the worker's problem of gaining a higher proportion of the wealth created by his labor.

The spokesmen and agents of monopoly capital, to maintain its domination, strive to keep the workers and farmers apart, to turn them against each other.

Among workers they propagate the false idea that all farmers are greedy exploiters, who wax fat and prosperous on the dear price of foodstuffs and clothing bought by the workers.

Among farmers they spread the equally false idea that the workers are continually disrupting the nation's economy and holding up the transport of farmers' products to the market and that wage increases are detrimental to farmers' incomes.

It is necessary for the workers and farmers, who are the two great producing classes and constitute the majority of the Australian people, to come together in alliance to defend and advance their mutual interests against the growing power of monopoly capital which today is the main enemy of the people.

### *MONOPOLY OVER THE LAND*

Finance capital has captured Australia's rural industries; its tentacles extend from the land to the machinery, fertiliser, chemicals and oil needed for production, to the processing, packaging and distribution of the product — the whole pattern is dominated by monopoly.

The banks and hire purchase concerns which extort high interest rates on land mortgages, machinery and equipment loans, the transport and shipping companies which charge exorbitant freight rates for the transportation of farm needs and products, the chemical and fertilizer manufacturers who extract high prices for pest disease control and soil ingredients, and all the other business agents of finance capital have woven a web around our farm industries and farmers.

High among this group of exploiters are the large canning and food processing companies.

They determine the price the farmer must accept and often the kind of crop to be produced, the animal used and the very conditions of production on the farm.

Big land companies, big grazing properties and big farms, many controlled through overseas directorates, exert constant pressure with their highly mechanised large scale production upon small and middle farmers. They dictate policy in their own interests.

### *THE REAL POWER*

It is the banks who are the real owners of Australia's farm land and industries.

The large land companies, pastoralists, graziers and big farmers are linked through shareholdings and interlocking directorships with insurance, iron, steel, oil, chemical, shipping, mining, newspaper, radio and brewing monopolies.

These concerns are owned or controlled by the same people as the banking ring. They constitute the financial oligarchy which rules Australia.

Finance capital, interested only in profits, forces down the real value of wages, thus restricting the workers' purchasing power and limiting the market for farm products.

On the other hand, finance capital forces up prices of land and farm requisites and thus raises the price of farm products further beyond the reach of the working people. In this and in many other ways monopoly exploits and impoverishes both workers and working farmers.

Monopolisation of the best land by big landowners and land companies and concentration of production on large-scale or highly capitalised farms is a constantly increasing feature of Australian agriculture and the movement of monopoly capital into land takes on many forms.

In the Northern Territory an American company has been granted control of a huge area of land to grow rice with wage labor.

In West Australia another American concern has purchased 1,500,000 acres which it is subdividing to sell at high prices to farmers who will to all intents and purposes be tied to the company.

In the 90 mile desert the A.M.P. leased a large area from the South Australian Government, which it is subdividing and allocating to farmers financed by mortgage advances from the company. It is estimated that settlers are committed to an expenditure of £50 to £60 a week to cover interest, maintenance and operating costs.

Control over land by ownership lease or mortgage by financial institutions, land companies and landlords, means that a large portion of farm income is diverted to rent, either in a direct form or indirectly through interest payments, instead of going towards improvement of the farmer's living standard and development of his farm.

Land monopoly increases the price of land, forces many farmers to fight a losing battle for existence in marginal areas with poor rainfall and soil conditions or, in the better areas, with insufficient land. Many others who want to become farmers are denied the opportunity.

Land monopoly creates landlocked towns, throttling local development of agriculture and industry and stifling social amenities.

It results in our natural resources being ruthlessly plundered without regard for the future.

Forests are destroyed, runs are overstocked, creating conditions for wind and water erosion to take their toll, with floods an increasing daily hazard.

#### *FAMILY FARMER AND NEW TECHNIQUE*

The majority of Australian farms still remain small-scale family holdings.

While monopoly has established almost complete domination over the land and its industries, it does not as a general rule control the method and management of all farms. However because big farms can more effectively utilise in their own interest the latest machines and technique they are increasing their stranglehold on rural industries.

Intense competition forces the working farmer, if he is able, to adopt new techniques: to invest in new machines in order to increase his production and compete with the highly mechanised large-scale farms.

But because large-scale farms are more able to efficiently use machines and scientific aids, the production on big farms is further increased and at a lower cost per unit and their competition strengthened at the market.

For the smaller and many middle size farms, the enormous cost for the purchase and use of machines and other modern aids does not return a similar rate of profit. In some cases the cost exceeds the benefit small farms gain.

Technological changes are also responsible for an excessive degree of specialisation on farms. Heavy investment in specialised equipment for a certain type of production limits the small farmer's ability to change over to other types of farming in periods of market collapse. This adds to the continued anarchy in the economy and intensifies farmers' difficulties in periods of crisis.

Within this unstable economic structure there are many share farmers, also tenant farmers who are denied the opportunity to have their own land. There are many whose land is so poor they are unable to make a living from it and are forced to accept either a low standard of life or to seek part-time employment as wage workers in industry.

Clearly, it is in the interests of all working farmers, farmers' sons, people of landlocked country towns, share and tenant farmers and rural workers, to come together and to link forces with the industrial workers in a struggle to break the grip of the monopolists.

#### *SMALL SCALE FARMERS*

To cover up its own dominant position and divert attention from its reactionary role, monopoly capital cultivates the theory of identity of interests of all farmers.

This theory is false. The interests of the vast majority of farmers are not identical with those of the land companies, absentee landlords and banks; neither are they identical with the interests of big farmers who employ mass production methods and are linked with the market and enterprises related to production.

A brief examination of the character of Australian farms proves that the vast majority are small and have nothing in common with big farm and monopoly interests.

A Commonwealth analysis of people employed on agricultural and pastoral holdings in 1953-54 shows the percentage of one-man farms in each state to be: Victoria—

63.7 per cent, Tasmania — 61 per cent, Queensland — 52.7 per cent, West Australia — 49 per cent, South Australia — 48.8 per cent, New South Wales — 48 per cent, Northern Territory — 21.5 per cent. An average of approximately 50 per cent for the whole of Australia.

If we exclude Western Divisions, the percentage of one-man farms in the main farming centres is higher than 60 per cent.

Then if we add family farms run by two people a much higher proportion is given, leaving a small minority of producers employing wage workers. These are mainly situated in grazing and pastoral areas.

#### *A COMPARISON OF RURAL LABOR FORCE: FARMERS AND WORKERS*

Commonwealth Statistics in March, 1956, were as follows:

Owner, lessees and share farmers .....	264,158
Relatives of owners not receiving wages .....	37,779
Permanent employees .....	97,354
Casual employees .....	94,245

Rural employees constitute approximately 38 per cent of all persons engaged in rural production.

If we add relatives not receiving wages to the total rural employees it would show 46 per cent of persons engaged in the industry.

Ten per cent of the total number of rural holdings produce more than 50 per cent of the wealth, while the remaining 90 per cent of landholders between them produce less than 50 per cent.

This data discloses the dominant position in rural industry occupied by monopoly capital and a minority of rich farmers, and illustrates that the overwhelming majority of the rural population have interests in common with the working class.

Many rural workers, non-owners and small and middle independent farmers live in the main in houses without modern amenities.

Rural workers and farmers who work part time as wage

workers need improved trade union organisation and the support of the industrial workers to advance their interests.

It is in the interests of the majority of farmers, as well as the workers, that the organisations of the working class are strengthened in the industries, towns and in the countryside.

#### *DEBT POSITION*

Australia's rural industries are saddled with a heavy debt burden at high interest rates which weighs down the majority of farmers; the amount owing to banks is only part of the farmers' total indebtedness.

Banking institutions in the main restrict credit to small scale farmers for equipment and developmental purposes. These farmers are forced to seek credit accommodation from hire purchase corporations that are usually subsidiaries to the banking institutions, and to borrow from private money lenders, insurance companies, trust companies, machinery companies, oil companies, traders, merchants, agents and storekeepers. Interest rates on hire purchase loans range from 8 to 25 per cent.

By means of this debt structure, finance capital not only takes a large part of the farmers' income, but is in a position to deprive him at will of his independence as a farmer.

The loan sharks, like land monopolies, must be curbed and the necessary assistance given to the farmers by a central Government banking authority.

Continued attacks by monopoly and their political parties on the Commonwealth Central Bank threaten even the existing inadequate loans position.

#### *DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS*

Australian agriculture urgently needs cheap and abundant water and power for its further development. Water to bring new land into production and to irrigate fertile acres; electricity to run modern machines, light

up homes and townships and to make life and work easier for all.

Because monopoly capitalism is concerned only with winning maximum profits for itself and callously disregards the best interests of the nation, our country is periodically ravaged by bushfires, droughts and floods; our forests denuded and soil erosion has reached menacing proportions. We have the knowledge and ability to overcome these calamities.

Workers and working farmers should combine to force State and Federal governments to act against big companies and landowners who disregard existing laws that give protection against drought, water and soil erosion and fire control. New legislation should be enacted to compel big landowners to contribute heavily to control and improvement schemes.

The State and Federal governments should be compelled to find the necessary finance for a nation-wide scheme to reverse the present process by re-forestation, flood control, soil and water conservation, a vast national fodder conservation scheme to prevent the waste caused through drought, and bushfire control through employment of all modern aids.

### *FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS*

To defend their interests and improve their economic conditions, farmers have established a wide network of organisations covering producers in the different branches of rural industries.

State and National Primary Producers' Councils exist to co-ordinate the efforts of the different organisations on questions of common interest.

Many of these organisations have a fine, early tradition of struggle in defence of their members' interests, but in the course of time many have come under the

influence and control of big producers and their political parties who have close affiliation with the monopolists who exploit the mass of farmers.

Rich farmers, having more time and money at their disposal, secure the leading positions in most farmers' organisations. This enables them to skilfully neglect to carry out the demands from rank and file members and to impose a policy which is in the interests of monopoly capital and against the interests of the majority of the members in the organisation.

The constitution and rules of most farmers' organisations stress their non-party political character and provide a forum for producers to raise their demands. The call from farmers' organisations for reciprocal trade with China and other Socialist countries, for the cutting down on war expenditure and the diversion of funds to essential work illustrates their scope.

It is necessary to assist in winning the progressive demands raised in farmers organisations and for farmers to seek the support of the organised working class movement in their mutual struggle against monopoly.

Farmers' wives should be encouraged to become more active in their organisations. Women are capable of wielding a big influence in farmers' organisations, also through women's organisations.

Much which is progressive has been achieved by country women and much more can be if the demands are taken up by them and supported by women in trade unions and other organisations.

All kinds of farm organisations should take up the economic and social problems of country youth who are denied many of the opportunities open to youth in the towns.

Women and youth in the countryside and their organisations would benefit considerably from closer relationships and regular interchange of experience with organisations of working class women and youth in the cities.



## THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Australia's primary producers have a proud record in the establishment of co-operatives covering marketing, processing of farm products and supply of farm requisites. The growth of monopoly and the development of large-scale farming are dealing severe blows to the independent co-operative movement.

Every year numerous co-operatives are set up and a greater number destroyed by economic pressure.

Monopoly demands complete control over the farm industries to ensure maximum profits, through its press and agents in the Liberal and other political parties it consistently endeavours to destroy co-operatives.

Monopoly interests offer producers temporary incentives, credits, better transport services and prices to win them away from co-operatives and get them at their mercy.

Banks impose credit restrictions and demands on the small co-operatives, and private concerns often refuse supplies at full wholesale price.

Many large concerns which started as small co-operatives and are still using "Co-operative" in their trade names, have secured themselves through company law connections with large enterprises. They are run by big farmers and big business interests with hand-picked directors and no longer serve the interests of small and middle farmers.

Co-operative organisations set up under Government enactment, such as the NSW Egg Board and the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing in Queensland, which market, process and distribute farmers' produce at cost, benefit both farmer and consumer, eliminate middleman profit, and, in present conditions, are co-operatives of a high form.

To build and strengthen producer and consumer co-operatives is in the interest of all working people who

should demand that State and Federal Governments enact the necessary legislation to give protection to co-operatives, provide the necessary finance and other essential measures for their success.

## LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTIES

The Liberal Party is the open and direct representative of the interests of Australian and overseas monopoly capitalism.

It is the enemy of peace, democracy and higher living standards, of all those things so dear to the majority of the Australian people.

The Liberal Party, which represents the wealthy minority, is incapable of winning an outright majority in Parliament and can only govern in alliance with the Country Party politicians.

The Country Party was established towards the end of the First World War to represent the independent interests of primary producers in Parliament.

When first formed the Country Party had a program of demands which aroused great hopes among farmers.

With its development, big business, realising the danger presented by an independent farmers' party which could ally the farmers with the working class, won control of the Country Party through top leaders whose own economic interests coincided and in many cases actually linked with finance capital.

In the Federal Parliament it has formed a coalition with the Liberal Party which dominates and dictates all major points of policy, including those covering country interests and farm industries, in the interests of the big bankers and industrialists, who thrive on the exploitation of workers and farmers.

(However in some States, due to the influence of small farmers who constitute the mass base of the Country Party, differences exist with the Federal organisation of the Country Party on important issues).

The conflict between the real interests of the majority of Country Party supporters and their top leaders' capitulation to monopoly influences is expressed in the desire to break away from the grip of the Liberals, the standing of independent candidates and sectional breakaways from the Federal Country Party.

To advance their interests country people must take up the struggle against the Liberal Party, and those Country Party leaders who tie the Country Party to it, linking forces with the workers' organisations in the struggle for a progressive program for peace, national independence and democracy.

A policy of peace and friendly relations with all countries is essential to the stability and further expansion of the export markets.

#### THE LABOR PARTY

Based mainly on the working class and drawing support from a considerable section of farmers and other sections outside the labor movement, the Labor Party has many progressive points in its country program which would if implemented advance the interest of the majority of primary producers.

Labor Governments have under wide pressure introduced reforms of benefit to rural workers and small farmers, but have never taken a decisive stand against monopoly capitalism, the real enemy of the working class and the working farmers.

The way forward to the winning of these demands will only come through the organised struggle of workers and farmers and the election to Parliament of true representatives of the people.

## The Communist Party

*The aim of the Communist Party of Australia is socialism, i.e. ownership by the people of Australia's natural resources and the means of production, the basic industries, financial institutions, transport facilities, and the large landed estates controlled by the monopolists and big landowners.*

*Our aim is to achieve Socialism by peaceful means through the combined struggle of the working people, workers and farmers.*

*The Communist Party is the consistent opponent of monopoly capitalism, the true representative of the interests of the working class and small and middle farmers.*

*The Communist Party defends the cause of peace and national independence. It fights for the preservation and further extension of democratic rights. In face of all the attempts by monopoly capitalism to keep them apart, the Communist Party works continuously to unite workers and farmers in struggle for their mutual interests against the common enemy.*

*The Communist Party puts forward the following program of immediate demands for farmers and farm workers and appeals to workers, and farmers particularly the great trade union and farmers' organisations, to join together in a united effort to achieve them.*

#### CLOSER SETTLEMENT

Resume large estates for closer settlement and to free landlocked country towns. Such land to be sub-divided and made available to farmers' sons and those able and willing to use it.

## MARKETING

- Develop new trade markets with the U.S.S.R., People's China, other Socialist and the Asian countries.
- Denounce all agreements which curtail our export market. Establish normal trade relations on a basis of equality with all nations.
- Government support for organised marketing under producer control with representatives of consumers on all Marketing Boards.
- Councils to conduct municipal fruit and vegetable trading markets wherein the Municipal Council buys direct from the growers and or their organisation under contract and sells direct and through retail agents to consumers.

## CO-OPERATIVES

The introduction of special legislation to provide a co-operative finance fund and to establish protective laws for the financing, strengthening and extension of Producer and Consumer Co-operatives unhampered by private banking and big business interests.

All co-operatives' Rules and Constitutions to give adequate protection against the co-operatives coming under rich farmer or monopoly domination. Each member to have one vote.

The aim of the co-operatives to be to eliminate middleman exploitation, distribute, supply and, where needed, process and manufacture goods on a non-profit basis, secure the highest possible return to the farmers and cheaper prices to consumers.

## GUARANTEED PRICE

Primary producers to be adequately protected against a price collapse on the market for their products.

State and Federal Governments to co-operate to provide stabilisation schemes for each farm industry, stabilisation plans to guarantee to producers employed full

time a price that will cover cost of production and a fair living income for the farmer and family.  
Amount produced above the guaranteed quota to be sold at net realisation.

## DEBT RELIEF AND LOANS

Farmers to be relieved of excessive debt burdens. A reasonable income to have first call on the farmer's returns. Long-term debts of small and middle farmers to be bought in by a central banking authority, re-adjusted, compounded into one account and repayments spread over a period of 30 to 40 years at a very low rate of interest.

Adequate finance for the improvement of farm property, implements and stock to be made available at a very low rate of interest.

- Moratorium on repayments of mortgage, hire purchase and other farm debts when farmer unable to meet payment through crisis.

## TAXATION

- Abolition of all indirect taxation on essential farm and home needs.
- Abolition of direct taxation on all incomes below an adequate living income.

## FREIGHTS

- Federal Government to extend the Commonwealth line of ships to a fleet capable of transporting our exports, imports and coastal trade, to guarantee Australia's independence and freedom from the avaricious overseas shipping combine.
- Writing off the heavy interest burden on State Railways. This would allow the railways to cheapen their rates and modernise rolling stock.
- Drastic reduction in sea, road and rail freights.
- Registration fees on farm vehicles carrying farmers' produce to be reduced.

## EDUCATION, RESEARCH

- Commonwealth moneys be granted to the States to provide schools adequately staffed and equipped both in central districts and in isolated areas and for the development of both central and smaller (including one-teacher) schools as centres of culture.
- Technical, agricultural and university colleges and universities be extended in country centres.
- Free Government transport to be provided and where it is necessary for students to live away from home, hostels be provided.
- A full living away from home allowance to all apprentices and students.
- The utmost use to be made of radio and television services to assist outback pupils in their education.
- Financial grants to be made to Universities for the training of specialists in plant culture, disease control and especially veterinary sciences.
- More Government research farms for special study and control of plant and stock diseases to be established.

## HOUSING

Commonwealth and State co-operation to provide:

- Loans for housing at low rates of interest.
- Adequate houses with modern amenities at low rentals for country workers.
- Legislation to compel employers to provide accommodation with up-to-date amenities for all employees.

## SHARE AND TENANT FARMERS

- Share and tenant farmers to be adequately protected by legislation against iniquitous contracts and agreements.

## RURAL WORKERS

- Rural Awards for all categories of farm work with award conditions equal to skilled workers in industry, with equal pay for women.
- Equal award wages and conditions for Aborigines.

## DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS

- Full-scale development on a comprehensive works program to control floods, for soil and water conservation, irrigation, fodder conservation, electrification, soil and pasture improvements, roads, homes and other needed amenities.

*The Communist Party claims that the way forward towards permanently higher living standards, cultural and social amenities will only be won in a struggle against monopoly capital and all its agents inside and outside the farmers' organisations.*

This struggle will bring the two great producing classes, workers and farmers, much closer together.

The history of the Country Party shows that the farmers cannot act independently as a political force—they must act in alliance with another class.

This class is not the big monopolists represented by the Liberal Party who grind the farmers down, but the industrial working class which is showing the real way forward by its militant and courageous battle for peace, national independence, democracy and higher living standards.

The united struggle of workers and working farmers will curb and eventually end the domination of monopoly capital in Australia.

On the basis of the people's movement, embracing workers and farmers, there will be established a People's Government.

A People's Government would not only carry through to completion the program of immediate demands,

but would go much further in helping farmers find a lasting solution to all their problems.

A People's Government will nationalise the banks, the big industrial monopolies, the oil, chemical, fertiliser and machinery monopolies which prey on the farmer.

It will carry out a policy of decentralisation of industry and of the organs of state administration developing country towns as administrative and cultural centres for the surrounding area.

A People's Government will put an end to the monopolisation of the land by the big squatters, absentee landlords and large-scale capitalist enterprises and make land available to all those who will use it.

The big landed estates, at present controlled by absentee landlords and large capitalist concerns, will be resumed in the interests of the nation and will be made available for closer settlement.

Small and middle farmers will be secured in their occupation of the land.

The living standard of rural workers will be improved.

In the case of the bigger farmers who have more land than they can use, their excess land will be bought in at a fair price.

The resumption of big landed estates, the purchase of excess land, and the bringing into use of new lands will ensure that farmers' sons, share and tenant farmers and others who wish to go on the land will receive farms.

Full protection and security of tenure will be given to all working farmers tilling their own land. Their debts will be cancelled and they will be given adequate financial assistance to further develop their holdings.

A People's Government will establish a system of planned production which will eliminate crises and create conditions whereby farmers will be guaranteed

a stable and paying home and export market for all that they can produce.

It will provide the most modern technique and equipment industry is capable of producing throughout the countryside to assist farmers in the development of agriculture.

A People's Government will also provide the maximum assistance in further developing producer and consumer co-operatives, under democratic control.

It will encourage the voluntary extension of co-operative methods to farm production when producers themselves are ready for this.

The State farms that will be established on some of the big landed estates that are resumed will play a big part in the further development of agricultural science, plant and animal breeding for the benefit of farmers.

They will carry out on a much wider scale what is now done on a small scale by experimental farms in helping to control plant and stock diseases.

Finally, a People's Government will embark on a vast program for re-making nature, which will include flood control, water conservation, irrigation, re-forestation, prevention of wind and water erosion, bushfire control, and electrification to bring light and power to every home and farm.