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WHY THE LABOR PARTY GROWS

BY SIR LYNDEN MACASSEY

To study the workings and machinations of the public mind is a matter of absorbing interest and of prime importance in the modern democratically-organized community. The trained observer can without much difficulty detect their inner meaning; they are invariably symptomatic of the well-being, contentment, and progress of the people. When tiny straws can show you which way the wind is blowing, it is surely an unstatesmanlike proceeding to sit still until a hurricane blast impresses you with a knowledge of the air it springs from by sweeping you and other obstacles out of its path.

There are many straws to-day traveling before a breeze of unvarying direction, all showing with consistency the set of public opinion. At times, as at recent by-elections, quite a summer gale has blown, and large fragments of the political machine have been torn up, carried away, and seen no more. Every sign of the weather suggests that the wind is steadily deepening in weight.

No one who comes in contact with his fellow citizens can fail to realize the deepening sense of public dissatisfaction that pervades the mind of every section of the people. How it expresses itself at political meetings I do not know; it, apparently, however, is making its mark upon the ballot box; but I have experience of the reasons which are advanced for its existence at large meetings of thoughtful men and women, who in increasing number are meeting throughout the country to dis-

cuss social and economic problems, with no eye upon the political barometer, in no partisan spirit; critically, it is true, but solely to advance the common welfare.

The chief impression left upon one's mind after such a gathering is the completeness with which one lesson has been learned from the war. All respect for political parties, creeds, and shibboleths has vanished. They carry to-day with the ordinary man no value whatever. One favorite subject of irony, at times, of sarcasm, is the eager anxiety of so many people to assure their supporters, that it was really at the sacrifice of private conviction to public expediency that they came forward as nominees of the Coalition Government to show the road to national prosperity and happiness. But when it comes to private conviction, to a convincing exposition of the requisite measures of social and industrial reform — *vox et praterea nihil*.

The truth is that the present Coalition Government has no considered policy whatsoever to deal with the many home questions that are uppermost in the mind of everybody. I am bold enough to assert there is not in existence at this moment in government or official circles even what faintly approaches a thought-out scheme — nothing but a lot of haphazard Cabinet decisions upon particular ills that have forced themselves from time to time by violent ebullitions on the notice of the government, but which, even if removed from their

isolated and lonely positions on the Cabinet minutes, and welded into one continuous document, would afford in no sense a considered, constructive, comprehensive policy.

If one reads aright authoritative utterances, the government is disposed to resent the constantly reiterated demand for a social and industrial policy. Why it should be assumed that such a demand, or criticism of failure to accede to it, must essentially be due to political animosity or rancor is a little difficult to appreciate. Surely that is a wholly unreasonable view to take of the position. The nation came after great tribulation, both public and private, through the greatest trial of its history. It came through solely by reason of its unity, and the strength which unity begets, and under the hope of finally attaining that reconstructed social and industrial life which was promised, and by some enthusiastic and irresponsible devotees of the Coalition promised much too lavishly. A pitiless refusal often works less social detriment than an impracticable promise. At the same time, within the limits of economic practicability, improved social conditions are long overdue; in many stratifications of the community that was regarded, and is still regarded, as the only adequate recompense for the impoverishment and bereavements resulting from the war. Since the conclusion of the war that sentiment has enormously increased in force, especially among the middle classes.

Promises always are a poor substitute for policy; when unfulfilled they bring a well-recognized retribution. Over and over again, throughout the war, did that Nemesis unveil itself. Once the government indicates its object in general, perhaps in rhetorically generous phraseology, and delays to formulate its policy, other people will

soon repair that ill-advised omission. All sorts of policies will appear — doctrinaire and revolutionary as well as evolutionary, and be justified as means to remedy an admitted evil. The natural and proper reluctance of the government to express approval of or sympathy with, still less to adopt any of them, is construed in the absence of a national policy as an attempt by the government to repudiate its original intentions. There will never be wanting persons to suggest all kinds of motives.

One immediate result of there being no government social and industrial policy is that large numbers of persons are definitely withdrawing their support from the Coalition and are ranging themselves with Labor, which has a policy, be it right or wrong; which is not afraid to state it and put it up to open criticism, nor openly to meet such criticism when it is advanced, and which has among its spokesmen persons who are personally conversant with, and have made a study of, social and industrial conditions. This is the explanation of what is happening to-day. There is, unhappily, little critical and dispassionate examination of the policy to which the secession has taken place; enough it is that there is a policy, and, therefore, evidence of an honest intention to set about the inauguration of that new social era which the government promised — and then left there.

Good reasons there may be, and no doubt are, for the government's neglect of our pressing social and industrial questions. The urgency of the international details of the Peace Treaty must necessarily have withdrawn not merely the attention but the attendance of Ministers from home affairs. But foreign affairs, unfortunately, do not figure largely in the mental outlook of the average man; where they do, it

is Russia, and in regard to that there is an unmistakable consensus of opinion that there has been a serious lack of government foresight and of judgment. The two home achievements of the government on the tongues of most are housing and coal. If the government itself is satisfied with them, its right to be so will form the subject of a determined challenge.

There are only two outstanding achievements of real industrial promise. The first is the scheme for considering and regulating railwaymen's wages, which for the first time recognizes the interest of the public in wage matters; the second is the new Industrial Court. As for the rest of the government's industrial programme — the two bills now pending in Parliament for minimum wages and hours of work — the former, in the view of most competent critics, is unworkable and valueless. Its object, which is admirable, can never be attained under the bill in its present form, the machinery of which will be a constant source of irritation and unsettlement.

What reason led to the adoption of the machinery of the Minimum Rates of Wages Commission Bill, which proved a failure in Australia, and to the rejection of the system of industrial Trade Boards under a Central Trade Board, which proved successful in Australia, will, no doubt, later form a subject for inquiry. If one dispassionately surveys the past fifteen months, it is patent to all that there has been no ordered and constructive attempt whatever to build a new social and industrial edifice, but merely an opportunist process of patching a building supported insecurely on an old and rickety foundation.

What the country most earnestly desires is a new social and industrial edifice, not raised with bricks stolen from one and labor forced from an-

other, but one which, under the inspiration and leadership of an energetic government, every member of the community, fairly and justly according to his ability, will work of his best to build. The name of the government is unimportant; its political texture is a matter of indifference, its historical lineage wholly immaterial.

There is no more encouraging feature at the present moment than the readiness of the country to support any government, apart from any political ticket, which honestly and steadfastly sets before itself a definite policy of social and industrial reform of economic practicability. The country does not want to be plunged into the turmoil of a general election if that can be avoided; but only those within the government know what are the obstacles that prevent the formulation and execution of a policy to give effect to the government's earlier professions. Rumor in well-informed circles is rife. Whether a change of name and a shuffling of the cards will remove those obstacles, only those among the elect can conjecture, with any approach to probability.

One thing, however, can be asserted with absolute confidence: The country regards with deep and growing concern the frittering away of that spirit of national unity and coöperation which, having carried it through the troubles of war, was hailed by the government as the irresistible flood to bear the country on to the full blessings of peace. That enough of the spirit to do so has yet survived the disintegrating influences of government indecision is obvious, if only given by the government at once a definite social and industrial policy to foster and to forward. Ideals such as those which are now happily actuating great masses of the people will not be suppressed.

THE EMIGRATION SWINDLE

BY VICTOR OTTMANN

It is easy to understand why a great many Germans, either for business reasons or because they are disillusioned and embittered by the misfortunes that have befallen their government and people, desire to start life again in a new country. The prevalence of this sentiment makes it more important than ever to caution those who are weary of their native land against hasty action. First of all, serious obstacles lie in the way of successful emigration, just at present. Most countries do not wish Germans, or are willing to receive only those skilled in particular trades and professions. As a rule, they do not wish any but farmers and mechanics, and those in limited numbers. Even countries that say they are glad to receive German emigrants attach many conditions to their welcome. In the second place, the low value of German money abroad is an exceedingly serious handicap. No one should contemplate leaving the country without some capital. But to-day, a few thousand marks in German paper amount to practically nothing as soon as you cross the border. They hardly pay one's passage on the steamer. For example, a steerage passage from Europe to South America when converted into German money costs two thousand marks or more. As the situation is at present, the Imperial Emigration Office, which acts as an adviser to prospective emigrants, is obliged to discourage most of the applicants who come to it for counsel. Its principal

business just now is to dissuade Germans from embarking upon such adventures with inadequate means, and from going to countries where they will not be welcome or where they are not likely to be able to earn a living. The office is also kept busy warning intending emigrants against the swindlers who are taking advantage of the prevalent desire to get out of the country in order to deceive their victims.

This emigration swindle is not a new thing. It is as old as emigration itself. The reason we heard so little of it before the war was that only a few Germans desired to emigrate. It has become an evil for our nation, because emigration is reviving.

Let us take a brief glance at the methods of these free-booters. They generally operate a firm with a name likely to inspire confidence, such as 'New Germania,' or, 'South American Settlers' Association.' Skillful and unscrupulous advertising brings such a firm a host of inquiries, so that the postal authorities are sometimes embarrassed in handling them. The inquirers always receive a courteous reply accompanied by printed matter portraying the land where they contemplate settling in the most glowing colors. The soil is of unexampled fertility; living conditions are ideal. There are brilliant opportunities for accumulating a fortune with a very small initial capital. The details are given with the greatest precision, accompanied by convincing statistics