

True revolutionary optimism is based on scientific understanding of social laws

Speech of E.F. (Ted) Hill

Communists are supreme optimists in a seemingly gloomy world. Australia itself is a mess. Its industry is run down, the monopoly miners rip up the country, dispossess the black people, export ill-gotten gains. Lack of jobs brings ill health and despair. Uranium and nuclear weapons threaten the people. The environment is poisoned. It would be possible to go on and on.

What then is there to be optimistic about? We witness a social system in the world and Australia that is coming to an end. It will certainly be replaced by a rational social order - socialism. Socialism removes the very basis for the chaos of the present social system. Socialism is derived from capitalism. This is shown by scientific analysis.

That scientific analysis shows that all social epochs come into being and pass out of being. They don't do it like pouring water on the instant coffee produces the perfect brew. It is much more difficult. There is upheaval, trouble, violence, war. It is often a protracted process.

If we get preoccupied with difficulties, and see only lack of success, setbacks, then we will despair and turn to escapism. If we get carried away by immediate successes in this or that field, we will lose our perspective. Many thought honestly and think now that Labor governments will solve all problems. Some think Labor governments will bring socialism. We respect that but we think it's not correct.

Some are afraid of nuclear destruction. Every sensible person is concerned about it. What to do? Communism offers an explanation of how the nuclear threat came about and what to do. War itself is going on in the Middle East, in Asia, in Latin America. Why?

The Communist and progressive movement in Australia is split up. There are various groups and people who sometimes attack each other more vigorously than they attack those whom they would probably agree are common enemies. It is a problem. Should we despair at it or should we try to do something about it?

Some see failure in socialism or get preoccupied with their own idea of socialism - test everything against their own idea - if socialism doesn't conform with that idea it is not socialism. There are differing ideas about the Soviet Union. Some disagree with our assertion that it is a superpower which seeks world domination in competition with the U.S.A.

Some disagree with us in believing China is a socialist country earnestly seeking to build socialism, serve the Chinese people and mankind.

The revealing of large-scale corruption in Australia affects many. Others become cynical.

Attacks on ordinary rights such as by the many royal commissions and inquiries cause further problems. The general pressure on real wages causes hardship and raises questions of where it will all end. Attacks on Communism, on Communists, publicity given to events in the Communist Party of Australia and people leaving it, cause more questions. Should there be a Communist Party?

Wherever we go, whatever newspaper we read, television or radio show, daily life pushes up problems.

Let me make one comment before I go on to try to show how Communism gives us the explanation and the answer. I stress that we Communists do not want to ram our views down people's throats. We offer explanation which we think is correct. All the evil things I have mentioned may cause gloom in some but the most significant feature is that always and without fail, people rise up to fight evil. The most inspiring thing in Australia is the Australian common people. They do not take things lying down. There is spectacular resistance and less spectacular resistance but there is resistance. People demand a proper solution of their problems. Wherever there is deprivation, and deprivation is in the nature of our social system, there is resistance. Think of our unemployed friends, our workers in the factories, the much-maligned ship painters and dockers and builders' labourers, our social service recipients, many others. Think of the resistance of the black people and the magnificence of their stand despite everything thrown at them. Think of the environment and the countless big and small people's actions in defence of nature, of health.

Australia's ordinary people are moving. They are moving because they are impelled by social forces to move. True they are not shouting out about capitalism and demanding socialism. They are not raising the banner of revolution. They do not in big numbers share our views. But they are questioning, weighing up, appraising, looking. They are going through the process of education and training for ultimate profound social change. There can be infinite confidence in them.

All these things do have an overall explanation. It is scientific. It is scientific socialism, Communism, socialism. I use these words to describe the social laws that do exist and were discovered by Marx and developed by Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong. Contradictory though it may sound, the relevance of Communism is established by the millions of statements about its irrelevance. If it is irrelevant, why worry about it? It is simply irrelevant and that is that. But there is semi-hysteria in denunciations of Communism.

What is Communism? Many of the denouncers create their own version of Communism and denounce that. They don't bother to read or state what the founders of Communism wrote or said. It is far easier to set up a straw man of Communism and knock that over. Another favourite device is to equate Communism with crime and denounce Communists as criminals. Another is to present Communism as some sort of conspiracy and Communists as conspirators. You are familiar with many variations on this type of theme.

It is safe to say that not a single day goes by, not a single newspaper is published, but that Communism gets a mention - none too favourable, except in the more important papers like *Vanguard*.

Then people like Mr. Santamaria and the egregious gentleman named McAdam, who writes in the Melbourne *Herald*, deplore the arising of what they call an anti-anti-Communism sentiment. They think it's very bad when there's any slackening off in the anti-Communist campaign. It should be stepped up, they say. All this actually has a side that helps Communism and those who champion it - the Communists. It raises the question of Communism in people's minds.

In one way or another Communism seeps up everywhere. The "contagion" spreads. Efforts to suppress it all raise the very question - what is it? Why does it remain? Why doesn't it go away? Why does it haunt the reactionaries? Even Mr. Hawke helped us a little when he said Fraser's advice about putting your money under the bed was no good because the "Commies" were already there. This idea is that there are Communists everywhere. And it is true - they are everywhere and if they are not yet Communists, they are on the way even though they may not realise it. People sense or

know the correctness of Communism even when they sometimes denounce it. This goes for some of the very big capitalists but it haunts them because its realisation is the end of capitalism.

The theory of Communism is simply the revealing of the fundamental laws that govern the development of nature and society. Fundamental natural and social laws do exist. If people understand them then they can use them. If they don't understand them then they fall victim to them. When lightning strikes, either you understand that positive and negative electric charges meet and know what to do about it or you don't know and are likely to be victim of it. Advance of understanding about electricity has meant tremendous advances in mastery over its use. The need to know about electricity arose from the social compulsion of improving the getting of profit and of a living. Greater production and greater profit under capitalism have compelled, great advances and greater knowledge. Necessity is the mother of invention.

Communism arose as systematic theory in the middle of last century. History had developed to a point where various social epochs could be seen to have arisen and developed and been replaced - primitive Communism of, for example, Australian Aborigines, then slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. By the middle of last century human knowledge, experience, had developed to a degree where for the first time it was possible and necessary to look back over the whole panorama to see whether or not a pattern emerged. That knowledge accumulated, and at the same time, crisis was afflicting capitalism because the way of getting a living had advanced to the stage where it couldn't go further without severely straining the relations between people - those of the rich and poor of capitalism. The solution had to be found.

The compulsions of social and scientific development demanded explanation so that there could be more development. It wasn't just an arbitrary whim or wish to find out but a necessity to find out. The basic thing was the way in which man got a living. Well, we take the unfortunate black people in Australia, made to look like the inmates of a zoo. Their emergence in a harsh country compelled them to combine with each other to eke out the barest of existence, to resist what to them were the blind forces of nature. As a single person - one alone - there was no hope of survival. But combined, they could hunt and fish and collect fruit and vegetables and so on. They lived in primitive Communism, compelled to do so by their primitive method of getting a living. No slavery existed. But in other countries in the period of primitive Communism, some did better than others due to factors of better land, availability of food and so on. Differences developed. Social advance to a new epoch didn't occur among Australia's black people because along came the capitalists compelled, by the need for markets and cheap raw materials, to expand - Dutch, Portuguese, French and English - and seized the lot. In other places, slavery arose - one "superior" tribe enslaving another or people capturing others. Slavery arose under the compulsion of development, advance in the way of getting a living such as tilling the soil. Then feudalism developed also in response to advances in getting a living. Within feudalism capitalism arose and finally its superiority shattered the old feudal social relations. The English civil war of 1641 and, the French Revolution of 1789 were simply dramatic episodes in the long evolution of capitalism. Primitive machinery, more substantial trading, grew up within feudalism. The old feudal social boundaries restricted the development of the market and trading. Over went the feudal boundaries. Influence of feudalism continued into capitalism. A great struggle occurred between the ideas of feudalism and the new ideas of capitalism. The superiority of capitalism gradually asserted itself. In England, right through the 19th century, the struggle was quite acute. Evolution of capitalism - change from feudalism - occupied a historical epoch.

Capitalism called into being gigantic means of production. Huge factories arose. Farming developed into large-scale farming. The modern working class took shape. The modern capitalist class took shape. The capitalist class maintained the private ownership of the means of production - factories,

mines, land - a form of ownership born of slavery and feudalism. It freed the old feudal serfs from attachment to the land. They now had nothing to live on except what they got by selling to the capitalist their power to labour. They became wage labourers. They gathered in the great factories. Australia knows them well, BHP, CSR, ACI, General Motors, Ford. Here each worker did only a minute part on what was to be the finished product. Each was dependent on another from start to finish. That was the characteristic. The process of production is already socialised within capitalism, it is co-operative labour. The form of socialism can be seen. The great contradiction is that the products of this socialised process of production are individually owned by the factory owners. BHP owns the steel. They make it for profit. Their profit comes from labour. For wages, they buy the power of the worker to work. They pay him around about the cost of living. But they can and do work him beyond that. They make more profit the less they pay him. So the never-ceasing struggle to keep wages up. The mechanism of capitalism keeps wages down. But if we understand the process we can do something in the way of struggle to keep wages up but only round about the cost of producing the worker. The working class grew and grew. Today, even more are being forced into the working class - advances in technology turn the clerk, the professional worker, far closer to the industrial proletariat. Capitalism relentlessly advances. To make profit, the capitalist must sell the goods he produces. There must be a market. The market embraces all people and all the world. If the capitalist pays less - keeps wages down - he is restricting the market upon which he depends for profit. There are germs of economic crisis in this. Goods pile up and can't be sold. Workers are dismissed. They fall out of the market. Intermediaries go bankrupt. Capitalism too is a system of bitter competition. It ruins the lesser - again a restriction of market. Its investments increase; that decreases the margin of profit. So it strives to produce more in order to keep up the margin of profit. Technology advances. Thus at the same time, the system is keeping down wages, seeking new markets and sources of cheap raw materials, covering the whole world in competition with others. There you have economic crisis and war. It becomes an international system. Gigantic imperialisms arise. They develop unevenly. Britain arose and fell. The conflicts have caused war - World War I and World War II and many, many smaller wars. Now two great imperialisms stand out in bitter rivalry - the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union.

The facts show that crises occur periodically. They tend to be deeper and more prolonged - the wars bigger and more destructive. That is capitalism.

It cannot solve its problems. Communism says if you extend the socialised process of production into socialised ownership, you have laid the basis for solving the problem. Then the people own the means of production. Production is not now dictated by private profit but is planned. People come first. They are their own masters. The basis of economic crisis and war is abolished.

But like the evolution of capitalism from feudalism, it is a complicated process. The theory of Communism shows the way scientifically. If people know that way, then they can act accordingly. In the overall picture, they can take account of the ups and downs. For the first time in the evolution of one social system from another, the process of evolution is understood. Scientific socialism, Marx's ideas, Marxism, provide that understanding.

Understanding, knowledge, gives mastery. The reactionaries therefore are impelled to try to confuse and destroy that understanding and the people are compelled to strive for that understanding. The people are assisted in their understanding by the very facts. Those same facts undermine the case for the capitalists.

Australia's history and development can be explained only on that basis. The primitive Communism of the black people is explained by the compulsion to combine against the forces of nature. The

seizure by the British is explained by the compulsion of Britain to exploitation of workers, some workers compelled to so-called crime, its compulsion to expand, to seek new markets and sources of raw material Australia became a supplier of food and wool to Britain. It became a part of the imperialism of Britain. But Britain declined. The U.S.A. usurped its position. Japan stepped in also. War occurred. Australians were involved in two world wars and in wars in South Africa, Korea and Vietnam. Sixty thousand Australians died for British imperialism in World War I, flung into the front lines as colonials. Now U.S. imperialism sits astride Australia. It occupies Australia's economic lifelines. It can, for example, cut off Australia's oil and Australia would come to a stop. Its bases in Australia arise because of its need to protect its world possessions. Internally they are directed against the Australian people. U.S. multinationals distort Australia's economy. This is not primarily due to the bad motives of anyone - bad motives arise from the compulsion of imperialism to expand its power, and the weakness of independent native capitalism. The Australian people, including what native capitalists there are, have a compulsion to get rid of that - to have an independent Australia. These are factors independent of what anyone thinks. They arise from socio-economic factors. Communism offers the explanation. If you understand, then you can act. Your revolt, protest, is not blind. It has a definite reason and objective. The immediate task on the way to a socialist Australia is shown to be to establish Australia's independence. There is an emotional side, if you like, to the demand for Australian bases for Australians but that demand arises from necessity - the necessity of developing Australia for Australians and towards socialism - it cannot develop as an appendage of Great Britain, U.S. or Japan. It is only socialism where Australians own the factories and land that will ultimately solve the problem. That is an advanced idea and advanced society and requires preliminary steps. At the moment, many people want the Yanks and Japanese out; only a comparatively small number want socialism. In the necessary preliminary steps as we see it, many can unite. They can put on one side differences as to the ultimate solution.

So too Australians for peace. There is again an emotional side to this. People's desires for peace have many reasons. Our analysis shows that war comes from objective socio-economic factors. Those same factors give rise to people's resistance to war although people may see themselves as having various motives. In order finally to eliminate war, society requires to be changed. In the immediate threat, all who defend the peace come together, leave ultimate views for peaceful exchange of opinion. War can be prevented or postponed if all get together against the continuous conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Even within that, there are degrees of united action. Every sensible person - I exclude those who profit from it - is opposed to nuclear weapons. To strike nuclear weapons from the hands of the superpowers who control 95% of them is a long step to peace. Opposition to uranium mining in Australia is good. Not only is the stuff a menace when the profit motive rules but it is another factor in the dispossession of the black people. It rallies a lot of people in opposition in struggle. While not all agree with us, we see that and all other people's struggle as part of the process in preparation for overall struggle that ultimately will lead to the end of capitalism. In passing, we support the New Zealand people in their outstanding efforts.

Let us take wages and living conditions. The struggle to defend them arises from those socio-economic factors. The struggle is compelled on the workers. It will cease only when socialism is achieved under which the workers will determine their own conditions. But in the meantime struggle goes on. Examples abound. The heart of it lies in exploitation of Australia by multinationals. In struggling, people come to understand more of the socioeconomic factor, more of the need for Australia's independence and sovereignty and ultimately socialism. Give it social consciousness and it is more effective. Take Australia's division into States. It is the result of British imperialism's divide and rule tactics. Now it is used by others to weaken Australia as a whole. If that is understood, then much can be done. Unity of our country is part of the struggle for independence and ultimately

socialism. I have touched on some immediate social problems in Australia. Now there is an election. The topic of our meeting is the relevance of Communism. A good question is the relevance of the election. This election will decide which