

Policy Launch Speech: George Reid, Opposition Leader (FT)

I.O.O.F Temple, Elizabeth Street, 24 October 1906

“I have been away so much from Sydney that I am anxious to have the honour of the company of the members of our Democratic Union executive, and those who are part of the committees in the various suburbs of the great metropolis, also some of the representatives of the six leagues of which this Democratic Union is composed. I am glad to meet you to thank you for the great unpaid and zealous services which you are devoted to in preparation for the great electoral struggle that is before us. I will now acquaint you with the manifesto which I address to the ladies and gentlemen who form the great body of electors.

In addressing you, may I pause for a moment to thank, with the utmost gratitude, those of you who live in East Sydney whose wonderful kindness and constant support have been my chief encouragement and reward through the whole of my long public career.

Mr. Watson and the leagues that control him brand me as the leader of a “reactionary and conservative party.” This charge is a false one. I am the leader of a party in New South Wales and in Australia, too, which is essentially liberal and democratic. Our policy has always been directed against monopoly and privilege, in every shape or form.

The greatest victory ever won in the Southern Hemisphere for the just rights of the people, in the way of lessening the burden of the poor, and in the direction of making the wealthier classes contribute more fairly to the cost of Government, was won by our efforts in New South Wales. It is also said that the wealthy classes, who have always opposed me for so many years, are helping our party now. I repeat what Mr. Dugald Thomson, treasurer of the Democratic Union, has said: “We have neither asked nor received in this great campaign a single penny of financial support from any of those great financial bodies to which reference has been made.”

As long as persons of that class act fairly and honourably, they are just as much entitled to defend their industrial liberty as any other persons. Does Mr. Watson forget that his followers are straining every nerve to destroy private enterprise? Does he forget that the high tariff manufacturers behind Mr. Deakin are fighting to increase the burdens of the people for their own personal advantage?

The rich have nothing to expect from us that the poor have not. Not long ago an eminent personage, who sometimes alludes to controversial politics, gave us a more flattering notice. He saw in us, if not the broad and healthy characteristics of patriotic democrats like Mr. Watson and his party, at least a resemblance to one of the greatest and most valiant, if one of the most eccentric champions of poor and distressed humanity – Don Quixote.

So long as Mr. Deakin was in office he got on very well with the Labour party. That was so from May, 1901 to April, 1904. That was so from June, 1905, down to the present day. It was so between April, 1904 and June, 1905. Mr. Deakin was then out

of office. He, with Sir George Turner, met me in conference in May, 1904. We then resolved to form, a basis of coalition. He, however, refused to take his proper share of the burden, Sir George, though stricken with a grievous illness, imperilled his health rather than allow me to be utterly fooled, and took on himself the duty Mr. Deakin would not.

A year afterwards Mr. Deakin made a speech which made our position intolerable. I adopted a certain course which Mr. Deakin thinks "treachery and betrayal." That course Sir George Turner, and every other Minister, fully concurred in. This imputation of treachery and betrayal represents all Sir George Turner has got from his old friend as a reward for keeping faith with me in Mr. Deakin's place. Sir George, one of the best and straightest and most useful public men Australia ever had, has not regained his health, and is compelled to retire from public life. I hope only for a time.

Who was the betrayer? (A voice : Deakin!) On Saturday, June 24, 1904 at the end of the recess, Mr. Deakin, at Ballarat, whilst in alliance with me, asked the Labour party to enter into an alliance with him. I point to that as the act of betrayal. It took the heart and soul out of our compact of alliance. Every Deakinite heart and soul with us, we had a bare majority. One defaulter could have ousted us. That speech at Ballarat every newspaper in Australia regarded as a "notice to quit." Could I go hat in hand to Mr. Deakin and ask if he really meant it? (Voices : No!)

If he did not mean it, could he not have corrected the universal impression by one friendly word? That friendly word was never spoken. The day before the speech, in a newspaper published 12,000 miles away, it was announced that Mr. Deakin, in that speech, would "reunite the protectionists, and end the coalition." Was the cablegram a spiritualistic freak?

Scarcely, for the correspondent of the London newspaper was, and is a Parliamentary hand on the staff on the Melbourne "Age!"

I know now that the defeat of the Reid – M'Lean Government was arranged between the Labour party and the Deakinities, or some of them, before Parliament met on the afternoon of June 28. Early in the morning of that day a Deakinite approached Sir Phillip Fysh and asked him would he support a motion to defeat us. To his credit he refused. (Applause.) He was then told, "We have got them beaten, anyhow!" Sir Phillip Fysh will not tell me the name of the Deakinite, but I have reason to believe he is an influential member of the present Administration. Will Mr. Deakin ask Sir Phillip who it was? (Applause.) He might tell him.

The results of the general election of 1903 made the position of the parties worse. Mr. Deakin became more helpless, the caucus became more powerful. The position sickened Mr. Deakin, and he escaped from it. Having broken from the caucus, he suddenly discovered that I was a good Liberal, with whom he could unite and whom he could heartily support!

The Labour Government went into office in April, 1904; he joined me in May. He then told the Labour party and the labour leagues what he really thought of them. A more seething political denunciation was never uttered in Australia. They were, he said, the fatal enemies of Australian progress. They threatened the independence of the whole community. They sought to push Australia over a precipice. Within a few months he was again there most obedient servant. The "social slavery" is not yet but the "Ministerial slavery" began afresh.

Mr. Deakin's comments on that Administration are most unfair and inaccurate. We came into office in the middle of one session, and were strangled before another session could begin. Every day Parliament sat with the slenderest possible majority: we were met by the bitterest possible opposition.

The difference between his term of office and mine was, we would not purchase a day's life at a sacrifice of self-respect. (Applause.) What was his conduct? He rushed again into the arms of the very men whom he declares to be the enemies of their country. (Voices: "Shame!")

This degrading alliance enabled Mr. Deakin to count on a temporary, but for the time solid, acquiescent majority. Was it strange that a good deal of work was done? The quality of the work, however, will not bear criticism. There was always a strong selfish element working behind the scenes. Behind Mr. Deakin there were those who wanted something more from the taxpayers. Behind Mr. Watson there was an army that wanted fresh advantages and further means of coercing non-unionists.

The political atmosphere was dense with self-interest. Under these conditions the Opposition had a constant, desperate battle to maintain in defence of the public interests and sound principles of legislation. Some of the measures of the Government included good objects.

Which the Opposition supported, but they nearly always went, to the extremes, which it was our duty to resist, or were full of defects it was our duty to correct. The able, indeed the splendid, work done by my deputy Mr. Joseph Cook – during my absence, often on political business as well as professional work, has been obvious to the whole community. That which Mr. Deakin calls "obstruction" most people will recognize as strenuous uniting effort to protect the public welfare.

This is a conspicuous specimen of the faults I have mentioned. Efficient measures to prevent unfair practices by trade combinations all can support. But even Mr. Watson does not believe in the methods of this Act. Under cover of a good object, that is, a power over trusts to prevent wrongdoing, there was enacted a system of prohibitory protection which entangles in Sir William Lyne's net every single trader, whether British or Australian, who is engaged in ocean commerce with the Commonwealth!

Before I came into office a bill of previous Deakin Government to prevent the piracy of trade marks was twisted out of shape by a Labour amendment in the Senate, inserting a scheme of trades-union labels, of which there were none then in existence.

We opposed this in the Senate, but the bill came down to the House where we did not take it up. In Adelaide, Mr. Deakin tried to connect me with the union label. Sir Josiah Symon exposed his unfairness. At Ballarat on Wednesday last Mr. Deakin, who knew so much better, repeated the same miserable tactics. After we came to office no Minister ever touched the union label provision, except to try to get it omitted.

The Deakin Government elaborately recast and supported the union label provision, which are now law. It was part of the price they paid for office. In its practical operation this power enables trade-unions to force every non-unionist out of a manufactory. Indeed, if there were 500 unionists and five non-unionist in a factory, the 500 are not allowed by the law, even if willing, to give their label to the manufacture, so long as the five remain.

This Act makes things really worse for the best sort of immigrants – those who come out not as adventurers, but under engagement to do work waiting for them. Thanks to Mr. Dugald Thomson, not to the Government, a provision was inserted relieving our kinsmen in England, Scotland and Ireland from some of the odious conditions still attaching to other white nations. Mr. Deakin and Mr. Watson would open the gates wide to “a farmer with a little capital.”

They will not open the gates wide to a white agricultural labourer, whose capital is in his brain and sinews, and a definite offer of honest work. These men are called “slaves” or “chattels.” As if an engagement to labour left an Australian a free man, yet makes a European something less than a free man.

Misguided, rampant, self-interest is at the bottom of this, not patriotism. But fling open all your gates for white men who will help us build up a white Australia on something better than Acts of Parliament – human energy and enterprise. Yet Mr. Deakin, who backs the Labour party up in their “dog-in-the-manger policy,” puts £6000 on the Estimates, and says he has converted a great immigration policy into an “actuality.”

All parts of the Empire joined in the project of a great Imperial monument in London, in honour of our late Sovereign, the best the world has ever seen. Our Government joined. If ever there was a project in which protectionists, free-traders, and Labourites could joyfully unite, this was one. Yet the Labour party refused to join, suggesting a hospital, “Oh charity, how many meannesses are cloaked by thy name.”

Shortly after the coalition Government was formed. On the basis of a fiscal truce the Isaacs-Lyne wing of the Opposition sought to embarrass us by a clamour for relief for the artisans of Melbourne, who were alleged to be starving, and the industries of Melbourne, which were alleged to be ruined. Mr. Isaacs, now happily removed from mundane troubles shed tears of anxious sympathy over the missing “Christmas dinner” of these unhappy victims.

Our Government appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the work of the tariff and its effects on Australian industries. I courted the fullest investigation. I knew there might well be anomalies that called for redress, and hardships that ought to be removed.

But I felt sure that the pictures of misery were sham pictures, and that the “ruin” was bogus, so far as the effect of the tariff was concerned. Mr. Deakin did not object to the appointment of the commission; indeed, I conferred with him as to its composition.

The evidence published from day to day revealed many unblushing attempts to fleece the public, but few cases in which the tariff had been the genuine cause of genuine distress. It was shown in some cases that those who begged for more “protection” had already an amount of duty which not only covered “the difference between Australian wages and the low wages of other countries,” but actually amounted to more than all the money spent in wages! The farmers appeared before the Commissioners to beg that the duties should not be increased.

At the present time the manufactures of Victoria are prospering beyond previous experiences, and pushing their wares all over Australia. The men who clamoured most, the two M’Kays, of the Sunshine harvesters, “were found to be making a profit of many thousands a year. A special Act to make them better off at the expense of the struggling Australian farmer has been triumphantly passed. (Cries of “Shame”)

Yet the hands employed to agricultural implement works in Victoria doubled in the past two or three years! This simply means that the M'Kays will make a magnificent haul out of a sham crisis!

The treaty with South Africa was a good one, easily accomplished. That with New Zealand has miscarried. But in reference to the scheme of preferential trade in England, the Prime Minister has covered himself with ridicule –both as the founder of a policy and as its pilot through Parliament.

The only conceivable shape in which the mother country could give us any preference worth having would be in the form of duties on food and raw materials, the bulk of the British imports from Australia. The only conceivable way in which the British people could be induced to change their present feeling would be by a genuine preference and real advantage given to the British manufacturers in the markets of Australia. Better far to do nothing than make a shame off which could only strengthen the opponents and discourage the champions of preference in the mother country.

Yet a single duty was reduced, in favour of Great Britain, and the duties raised against the rest of the Empire and foreign countries covered only a few hundred thousand pounds worth of foreign trade. Our import of apparel and textiles is £9,600,000 a year. Our import of piecegoods, including woollens, is £6,250,000 a year. Our import of metals and machinery is £6,250,000 a year. With two exceptions, covering £20,000 of foreign trade, there is not one line of preference to the mother country touching the £22,000,000 worth of trade under those headings. (Cries of “Shame”)

If Mr. Deakin's measure was a sham his piloting of the measure was even worse. He allowed an amendment to stand, as to the colour of the crews and cabin boys on British ships carrying the goods, which makes acceptance of that bill by the British Government impossible. The amendment was carried in a thin House by a majority of one – I happened to be there. I implored the Prime Minister to try for its rescission. He refused. The end of it all was that the Board of Trade reminded him of a number of treaties by which we are bound, and the poor man in his desperation actually made use of a Governor-General's message, in order to set a bill right, not in a matter of form, but of substance. The Senate properly refused to allow the Government to introduce the King's representative into the sphere of politics in order to cure the foolishness of his Ministers.

The bungling of the Government over this important matter has been mainly caused by the duel between two Ministers, Sir William Lyne and Mr. Chapman, for their respective sites, and the desire of the Victorian members of the Cabinet to go very slow. If the selection of the site involved a huge expenditure, as often alleged, one could not wonder at opposition. But the expenditure need not run into large figures, until the population runs into many millions.

A capital in Sydney, or Melbourne, would cost ever so much more than a capital in the interior. Every representative in New South Wales should be bound down to a demand for an immediate settlement of this matter. There was a wonderful struggle to add to the revenues of the harvester-makers – if one-tenth of that had been devoted to the question of the capital site it would have been chosen long ago.

I joined with those who were prepared to repatriate the kanakas, and this of course exposed that great industry to a period of anxiety and crisis. Ever proof that the ruin predicted will not follow I notice with great pleasure. If the white labour in Australia cannot, or will not, save the cane-fields from desolation the industry must be

reinforced by white labour from abroad. But so far, no necessity has been shown for extraordinary measures.

Various great projects are “in the air” for railway systems across the continent from and to various points. Such projects must some day, be carried out. But I regard a railway extension through South Australia to Western Australia as one which ought certainly to be carried out, unless the proposed survey shows it to be impracticable.

I regard the bill for a survey of the line not as a concession, but as the least possible thing we can do in justice to the grand State and enterprising people of Western Australia. Closer touch between that vast area and the sister States will be of signal service to all. I know there is much opposition to this by members of all the political parties, but I have never altered my views as expressed from the first.

One of the saddest mistakes the dying Parliament has made was its abuse of its proper authority displayed in an Address to the King on the subject of home rule for Ireland. I appealed to the House to leave that vexed and burning question to the ordinary fields of free public discussion, instead of using the name of the whole Parliament and people without any warrant from the constituents.

Our Federal Parliament has troubles, and fights, and duties enough without advising other Parliaments, equally independent, how they can improve their legislative machinery. If a separate Parliament for Ireland would be a good thing I am satisfied the good sense of the people of the United Kingdom will bring it about. The wish of every admirer of the illustrious Irish race is that the memory of their ancient wrongs may be entirely effaced by every possible measure of generous redress. Public opinion on the subject of home rule is greatly divided. Many support it because they believe it will make the United Kingdom more united still. Others believe the movement to be inspired by a desire to break up the United Kingdom and dismember the British Empire.

The Federal Parliament should not have forced this controversy on Australian politics. The Parliament will soon be dissolved, and its Ministry and its members are approaching that one eventful day on which you, and not they, are the masters of the State. You, ladies and gentlemen-the electors of the whole Commonwealth – must judge between us.

The Government comes before you not with a majority, but as a remnant of a body whose majority has disappeared. That solid phalanx of 45, which got on so comfortably, together, making laws as if they really believed in one another is now broken into two. One fragment is driven to the task of “exterminating” the other. The other fragment fills the air with curses aimed at the “machine,” whose pliant tool it was just a few short days ago.

Such is the deplorable state to which responsible government and Parliamentary institutions have been reduced. How pitiful the present fate of that Constitution, which Mr. Deakin in his better days use to hold up to your enraptured imaginations. “Strong as a fortress, sacred as a shrine.”

The Ministerial party in the House and Senate comprises : - New South Wales members 4, Victoria 11, Queensland 1, South Australia 2, Western Australia 1, Tasmania 2. Total 21. The other parties in the two Houses were : - New South Wales 23, Victoria 16, (2 vacancies), Queensland 14, South Australia 11, Western Australia 10, Tasmania 9. Total 88.

Nine Ministers and twelve supporters. What satire more stinging than these plain figures could be invented? And what appeal does this diminutive remark make for a fresh lease of power and leadership in Australia? Clearly its only chance of living as a Government depends upon another miserable term of servitude to the socialist "machine" and the Labour cause.

Alone it can do nothing but injure the liberal cause and advance the socialist cause. And yet every Minister but one is an anti-socialist. And that one is a political conundrum Surely the electors will restore Australian politics to some higher level in which great principles range men in sympathetic groups.

The Labour socialist leagues are doing one good thing for Australian politics; they are striving to get rid of the system of three parties just as strenuously as we are. They have responded with scorn, to the overtures for an alliance, not based on principle but place and pay, They believe their party has a future. They know the Government has only a past. Unless you, ladies and gentlemen, respond either to the appeal of the Opposition or the appeal of the socialist, you will be the real authors of another miserable period of intrigue.

What is the appeal the shattered Deakin Administration makes for a continuance of its humiliating career? What great inspiring cry comes from Ballarat? Nothing but a wall over a distress which does not exist, in order to fill the pockets of a few men who already have enough out of the taxpayers. The Victorian Chamber of Manufactures waited on the Chief Secretary a few days ago and drew a sad picture, not of a deficiency of orders, but a deficiency of skilled labour.

Last time Mr. Deakin was for "fiscal peace" and "preferential trade." Now he is for "higher tariff" and "preferential tariff." The latter dual cry is almost a contradiction in terms, for Great Britain manufactures nearly all the things the additional duties are wanted for. Will the Government specify the industries which are in distress? The Labour-Socialist party, on the other hand, raises one of the most momentous problems of the present day.

The issue which rises above all others, like a lofty mountain above a range of hills, is that involved in the socialistic "objective" of the Labour party. Is that to be the "beacon light" of the political destinies of Australia, or is it not? (Cries of "No") That is the great question beside which all others are insignificant. That great question divides two great parties. What says the party hanging on our flanks. If it is against socialism, why is it fighting us? If it is for socialism, why is it fighting the socialists?

Before dealing with the great, the vital issue, to which I have referred, I desire to point out the lines of public policy which should, in my opinion, be followed upon some other public questions.

One of the chief grounds on which I earnestly appeal to the electors to vote for, my supporters is that I desire to see the supremacy of the secret caucus destroyed. The fate of policies now is decided in secret conclaves, which contain representative bound hand and foot to vote as a majority decides on all matters affecting the platform: and few things do not! If thirteen in the caucus say "Yes, and twelve say "No" the whole 25 are compelled to say "Yes" in Parliament, 12 violating their judgment and the duty they owe to the Parliament and to the electors of Australia.

If you are opposed to the caucus, do not help the caucus by voting for the Deakin Cabinet, which is willing to do the work of a caucus again if a chance is offered.

I ask you to let the present protective tariff rest, adjusting anomalies and hardships which the reports of the Tariff Commission may bring to light. Personally, I favour the suggestion for a referendum for the whole people, in order that the lamentable differences which divide liberals, without dividing Socialists, may be settled. The bookkeeping clauses should be ended. The case of Western Australia can be equitably provided for.

The protection afforded by the Braddon clause the finances of the State should be perpetually extended, but in a more flexible form.

The question of old age pensions could be settled at once, as it ought to be, if Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, as I have pressed them to do, would fall into line with the other three States which responded to my appeal. In South Australia and Queensland there are Labour Premiers. I regard a national system of old age pensions as one of the essential features of Federal policy.

If the people of Great Britain change their minds and believe a preferential arrangement with Australia advisable, I would meet their wishes by an equitable agreement. But I do not think the people of the mother country will ever agree to taxes on food, and their horror of such taxes is natural, and I think sensible too. I support an unconditional preference, offered by Australia to the mother country, but if any is offered it should not be a sham.

National defence I regard as a matter of supreme importance, but I do not favour universal and compulsory military service. I would favour compulsory military drill in all Public schools, and especially encourage the cadet movement. I think provision also for a continuous system of military training for some years after the boys leave school most desirable. In that way we shall get, nearest to universal training, without universal conscription. Encouragement of volunteer forces, open to the boys when they become men, should be the leading feature of our military system.

I thoroughly support efficiency of equipment. The highest, grades want of all is a military chief of acknowledged eminence in the art of war, and experience gained in commanding large bodies of troops in actual warfare. Acting on the ignoble cry of "Australia for Australians," the Government, have put in the supreme position an officer of high standing and ability and a person of merit, but without either of these vital qualifications. If they did this in time of danger they would deserve to be impeached for high treason.

Coast and harbour defence is, I consider, even more vital than military defence, because sudden ocean raids are more likely dangers than attempts at a permanent landing. Whilst the British fleet is, and must for a long time to come be our main line of naval defence, we owe to the Empire, as well as to ourselves the duty of laying the foundation of an efficient system of port and coast defences – an "inner line" of naval defence – which is at present sadly neglected. The presence of an Australian navy on the high seas is an affair of the future.

I regard immigration as the greatest of our industrial and national needs. Not reinforcements for our overcrowded cities, but a stream of white agricultural immigration. Farmer, if you like, but agricultural labourers too. The laws against white immigrants with definite employment before them, which Mr. Deakin and Mr. Watson defend, largely discount all their professions on this subject.

A Federal Department of Agriculture would be one of the best of Federal developments.

Canada sets a brilliant example to Australia in the art of advertising her national resources, and attracting a desirable population. One of the greatest objects of Federal concern should be a practical and continuous effort to make known in the markets of the whole world the excellence and variety of our primary products. This work would return a more valuable result to the people than all the torrents of Parliamentary eloquence which flow over endless pages of "Hansard".

Without sacrificing the vital principle of racial integrity, we should set ourselves to develop the friendliest possible relations, not only with the islands of the Pacific, but with all nations. New Guinea is a vast and populous territory, in which two great Federal obligations must not be allowed to clash. I mean our duty to promote and encourage white enterprise, and our duty to protect from wrong a vast black and white defenceless population committed to our care. The present un-natural arrangement, under which the produce of New Guinea is treated as if it came from a foreign country, is indefensible.

Subject to precautions against strike labour and deceptive agreements at wages below fair Australian rates, I am in favour of the repeat of all the provisions against white immigration.

I have already expressed my strong view in favour of the bill for a survey of a line of railway to Western Australia. For reasons already given I also favour the repeal of the union label provision.

I did not oppose the Bounties Bill, although it was submitted in the crudest possible shape. I supported it because of the paramount importance of the object in view. Now developments of agricultural enterprise increasing the range of private enterprise and pioneer settlement over the great undeveloped continent are well worth trying. Every precaution must be taken to avoid the disappointments and prevent the abuses with which such schemes have been so often associated.

The Northern Territory must be federalised, civilised, and developed. That is one of the greatest and grandest tasks of the Commonwealth. In that task, beyond most others, there is room for boundless enterprise and only by such means can Australia attain a defensive position.

It is here that the objection to white immigrants under engagement, and the persistence by Mr. Deakin and Mr. Watson in laws which hamper it, become so astoundingly bereft of the faintest glimmer of statesmanship. Compulsory arbitration in Australia, so far, have not worked well, for either employer or employed, in many cases. Peace and harmony have certainly not been established. One voluntary agreement is worth a thousand sentiments by force. I would like to see the compulsory process of conciliation put more to the front.

A comparison between the constitution and working of the Wages Boards of Victoria and the Arbitration Act of New South Wales as a means of accruing the great objects of such laws, (1) conciliation, (2) fair wages, and (3) if necessary, a compulsory settlement of differences, seems to me to be all in favour of the Victorian system.

Although I submitted to the general sense of the House in the matter of preference to unionists, with the rider attached, I am personally opposed most strongly to any exercise of a power of preference for one work against another by a judge presiding over a tribunal of justice. Any preference or advantage unionists gain for themselves they are entitled to just as fully as any merchant is entitled to his profits; but I think

the law should stand neutral, and interfere with no man's right to earn his own living, whether he be unionist or non-unionist.

Whilst no man believes more strongly in the policy of closer settlement than I do, or would pursue a more vigorous policy of breaking up large estates in Australia than I would, I prefer the first of the two methods embodied in the "fighting platform" of the Political Labour League of New South Wales. In that platform one of the planks is "Resumption of land for closer settlement," the other is a progressive tax on all lands over £5000 in value.

The Federal party has adopted the second. It could not, if it would adopt the first, because the Federal authority could not resume lands for closer settlement. What the Labour socialist party cannot do directly, it seeks to do by sabotage and by an invasion of State rights. They have no more legal right to cut up land in the State by means of a tax than they have by means of a surveyor. Their project seeks to make all land holdings, however small, subject to the panics of a glutton market, in order to nationalise them, whether large or small, which is the first article of the creed. One of the obvious advantages of the policy of State resumption is that the State can choose the best lands first. Under the progression tax the large estates would be reduced on the basis of getting rid of the worst land first.

I believe in land value taxation as a perfectly fair principle. I carried a land tax in New South Wales. But land value taxation, and closer settlement, and "bursting up the large estates," are all questions just as entirely within the province of the State, and just as foreign to the jurisdiction of Federal politicians, as an attempt to "burst up" the Public schools or the Public hospitals would be. There are two ways of carrying out the great and beneficial work of closer settlement – one by an unconstitutional stratagem; the other by the simple, honest method of resuming, and paying. This course leaves land at its honest value, whether held in 50 acres or 5000. The other method involved all land values in chaos, ripe for that socialistic proposal, "nationalisation of land."

There are a number of changes in the Navigation laws, which ought to be made to promote the comfort and safety of sailors and passengers alike. But one of the aims of the Labour party is to establish a "ring" of their own in the Australian shipping trade, by putting British ships under restrictions not yet attached to them. This is also one of the aims of the "shipping ring" which they denounce.

I am glad that the recent State conference has arrived at conclusions with reference to the public debts of the States, which bring the great advantage of Commonwealth control within measurable distance.

I look upon Federal codes on the subjects of banking, trading corporations, insurance, bankruptcy, and all other commercial matters included in the Constitutions as an important part of the practical benefits of Federation to be realised at an early date. I now come, ladies and gentlemen, to the greatest of all the Federal issues. Shall the policy of socialism be adopted as the national policy, or shall it be emphatically discarded and repudiated.

This is no question of using the powers of the Commonwealth freely and fearlessly in redressing wrongs and suppressing abuses, or in advancing the general welfare. That policy began and flourished in Australia long before the socialists were even heard of, and will continue long after they have disappeared. The socialism which we will fight to the death is not the use of the powers of the State for the advancement of the

people, but an attempt to enable the State to usurp the function of private enterprise and to destroy the industrial freedom of the masses in order to make them become servants of the State, whilst taking all the risks of gigantic trading speculation, managed by official “bosses.”

The first demand of the socialists is, “nationalise monopolies.” This issue really raises the whole question. If a tobacco monopoly is to be run by the Commonwealth why not nationalise all other industries? The “objective” of the socialist clearly involves that source. It covers “all products, “therefore all “producing industries.” If as they say, capital is “exploiting” labour, I say the State would “exploit” labour too and with more effect.

Private enterprise pays all its own losses, but the socialistic State would cast all the losses of its stupendous undertakings on the workers, who would, when the scheme was completed be the only shareholders of “Australia Unlimited,” with the capital debt of £1,000,000,000, and an interest payment of £50,000,000 a year to provide for – equal to about £1 a week out of the pocket of each male worker – before the gigantic monopoly began to make a penny towards earning a bare subsistence for the people, to say nothing of profits!

What a mess the politicians – for they are the State in its active personality – have nearly always made of politics, for which they are supposed to be specially fitted! But our blunders in politics would be fascinating compared with the horrible tangle we would get the people into in trying to run all the town and country industries of Australia.

The first step essential to socialised industries would be the proclamation of industrial despotism – absolute suppression of private enterprise – absolute authority in the bosses – absolute subjection on the part of the men – absolutism everywhere! The workers would have to go where ordered, do what they were told – and take what they were paid. At present they can shift their political masters, then their master (that is, the State, that is, the “bosses”) would shift them!

Are the socialised workers to be paid according to merit? (A voice: “No”) That would mean an immensely costly audit, and universal discontent. Are they to be paid the same all round? That would amount to a gigantic “exploitation” of labour on the part of the State, the weak and lazy enjoying dividends equal to those earned by the strong, the capable, and the industrious.

Again, universal discontent. The horrors and miseries of that socialistic experiment in Paraguay would spread over the whole continent. “Individualism” and “competition”, instead of being suppressed would assert themselves in far more unlovely and disastrous forms than ever, because there would be only one ladder of ambition left, at the foot of which a million of male workers would scramble for a billet.

The terms “capital” and “capitalist” cover more than money. They include the few who have much money, the many who have some, and all who have none at all. The brain of a man, his physical strength, his frugal, indomitable spirit, all these are forms of “capital” and all the men possessing them are “capitalists.”

Almost every successful man in Australia began life with no other capital. These qualities were translated by arduous labour and enterprise into money, just as the qualities of some other men translate themselves into failure and self-indulgence. In seeking to destroy the motives which make men “capitalists” you seek to destroy the motives which make men and nations of men successful. You do more. You sound

the death-knell of personal liberty, as well as contract the opportunities of personal ambition.

The State industrial become one of a vast army. He is an elector one day in three years, he is a shareholder when calls have to be made; but a free agent, no, and never. A parental authority far from divine surrounds him, from which there is no escape, either in youth, manhood, or old age. Today the Australian people are the masters of the State. Then the State would become the immovable, eternal master of the people.

These socialistic schemes have been tried everywhere, and have failed everywhere. They were conceived more than 2000 years ago, and have never since then won the endorsement of a single statesman in any country. They transform the relations of human life and factor human initiative at every point. They really require the recreation of humanity, for force cannot reform the human soul. Love may, self-sacrifices may; but force, never.

In place of all these mad, disastrous schemes, I have a few simple suggestions to offer. If Labour does not get its honest share in the great work of production, see that it does get justice. If monopolies become a nuisance or an injury, regulate or suppress them. But do not enslave all because some do wrong. Do not force industrial fetters on all, because some are weak, or lag behind. Relieve the industrial cripples by some other methods than that of breeding a nation of industrial conscripts.

I have fully opened my mind to you upon all the great questions of the day. Although I have criticised the present Administration, as I thought it my duty to do, I believe most of its members, and nearly all its adherents, will soon realise that I have not manufactured an election cry, but have discovered a real and increasing national danger, which must someday compel all Liberals, whether in one camp or the other, to bury their grievances and their differences and rally their forces to free Parliament from the domination of the secret caucus, and to defend the industrial and political liberty of Australia from the attack of socialism.

Last night the innate ferocity of the socialistic tiger displayed itself. The right of public meeting, the right of free speech, the common fairness of allowing me, as one political leader, on a public platform – all these were outraged: and considerations which appeal to every civilised intelligence and to the most rudimentary instinct of political liberty were deliberately and persistently trampled under foot. The tiger cub of Australian socialism is indeed beginning to feel its claws and to show its teeth.

I close this manifesto with the memorable words of the present Prime Minister, Mr. Deakin, when he and I stood side by side in the political arena. “Instead, therefore of taking the downward path that would lead to political servitude, and perhaps to social slavery, we want to rally to our flag those in favour of responsible government, to restore majority rule, and to maintain that priceless heritage which our forefathers have handed down to use, and which we should preserve or perish.””

Source: Compiled from The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 October 1906, page 9, and The Age.