

addressed to committed church people, and Sir John Marshall in his urbane introduction says it will provide 'many stories for many sermons'. Secular people will find it of value as a straight presentation of the life and thoughts of a nineteenth-century missionary and minister from his own point of view.

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International Socialism and Australian Labour. By Frank Farrell. Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1981. 284pp. Aust. price A\$24.95 hard cover, A\$11.95 soft cover.

EVER SINCE William Lane boldly proclaimed that Australian labour parties were 'socialist from the jump', historians have been endeavouring to tease out and evaluate the socialist elements of labour platforms or propaganda. Dr Farrell's book takes up the task for the inter-war years—a time when socialist aspirations were riding high. In Europe, international socialists had disintegrated before the calls of patriotism and nationalism. In Australia, the efforts of the Labour prime minister, W. M. Hughes, to promote conscription split the labour movement. The outcome, however, was that radical and socialist unionists achieved a greater degree of authority within the organized labour movement than they had been able to attain previously. Indeed, in the last year of the war, and for a few years afterwards, Australian labour veered abruptly to the left and trade unions adopted a militant stance. The gradualist and nationalist stance which the Australian Labour Party (ALP) had previously offered the electorate came under increasing attack. And in 1921 the ALP, in deference to the demands of radicals, wrote a socialist objective into its platform. At about the same time other avenues opened up for the socialists. The Communist Party was firmly established between 1920 and 1922 and a number of other sects pressed their claims to be recognized as the legitimate voice of socialism. Indeed, as Farrell points out, by the early 1920s the struggle for influence within the labour movement was between a cautious moderate isolationist wing dominated by labour politicians and their supporters, and a radical working-class internationalist group led by left wing socialists based in a few powerful unions.

Other historians, most notably Robin Gollan and Alastair Davidson, have journeyed down this road before. They have shown how the socialist initiative waned and how by the end of the 1920s the heartland of socialist aspiration was the Communist Party of Australia. They have demonstrated also how the latter came, as Farrell writes, to be embedded in the perennial socialist dilemma: 'how did they lift the sights of the rank and file within the labour movement from mere economism or laborism for sufficiently long to carry the socialist revolution to Australia?' Farrell is also travelling down a familiar path when he traces the process by which Communist influence, especially among trade unionists, grew in response to changing Australian conditions and fresh Comintern directives in the

mid and late 1930s. Where Farrell adds significantly to knowledge, however, is in his treatment of the difficulties which the peculiarities of the Australian labour movement's situation created for socialists endeavouring to adopt a genuinely internationalist stance. These difficulties are most clearly illustrated in the chapters on the Pan Pacific Trade Union Movement (PPTU). A practical expression of socialist internationalism, the PPTU sought to link the trade union movement of Australia with those of China, Russia, the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Korea and the Philippines. The need for such an organization stemmed from the assumption, common to left-wing analyses of international affairs, that World War I signalled an era of continuing imperialist wars. The Pacific, it was claimed, was likely to be the 'cockpit of the next great war'. Socialists were alarmed by the projected revival of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty and sought to develop a working class alternative to imperial alliances and embroilment with 'militarist' Japan. In short, they presented the PPTU as a socialist alternative to capitalism, imperialism and war. Such international affiliations, however, created a point of tension within the Australian labour movement. Labour Party leaders, intent on mending the fissures of wartime disintegration, were fearful that such affiliations brought Australian labour into contact with Communist Party-led European labour movements. It also meant alliance with labour movements that might threaten the hegemony of Great Britain and this gave offence to the advocates of Empire loyalty in Australia. Moreover, some of the more conservative unions such as the Australian Workers' Union came to see the whole enterprise as part of a Communist plot to undermine the White Australia policy. The restriction of Asian immigration had long been ingrained in the ALP and while the Australian socialist left endeavoured to minimize the racist and nationalist defences of the policy they were nonetheless circumscribed by its very existence. International socialists abroad were ultimately alienated by the failure of their Australian counterparts unequivocally to renounce the White Australia policy. They condemned the Australian labour movement for being 'as much at variance with its own people overseas as with the forces of the economic system it seeks to end'.

Ultimately, Farrell argues, the Australian socialists found the task of reconciling the attitudes and prejudices of their native environment with their commitment to international socialism something of an academic tightrope. The result was an anti-militarist stance exemplified by opposition to compulsory military training and isolationism. Australia would involve itself in war only after a 'decision of the people'. Yet ultimately without American and Japanese co-operation the regional security which they sought was well nigh impossible to achieve. Isolationism was thus no more than a coping strategy. And increasingly, as Farrell says, the Australian labour movement, inspired by purely political considerations, veered towards a position which accommodated majority opinion and supported imperial links.

In sum, *International Socialism and Australian Labour* makes an important contribution to Australian labour history. Not the least of the book's attributes are the clarity and life which Farrell has brought to the task.

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