

The Elect and the Electors.

An Ideal Worth Striving For.

Victorious Labor Party! Some people say the victory has been won owing to the high food prices; others add that the American meatworks gave their helping hand—unwillingly, of course.

These and many other indications show at any rate that the Labor victory is rather a chance than a clear and firm understanding by the people of working-class needs.

In plain words, life has become insufferable, and people are looking for the way out. Any change seems to be salutary—any change out of the present state of affairs. And the people turned to the Labor Party.

But it would be woful indeed if Labor's success were nothing else but a plain chance. And if it is so to some extent, the Labor Government's duty now is to make absolute success in future a logical indispensableness.

How is this to be done? The stability of the Labor Government in Queensland lies entirely on the Queensland branch of the Australian Workers' Union. If the laborers are united, and animated also with their common ideals—ideals of the working class—there will be no room in Queensland for any other party but Labor.

Now one might ask: Are our workers conscious of their real needs; are they united spiritually?

Well, if we don't want to undergo a painful disappointment we must face any reality, however disagreeable it be to us. And every impartial observer ought to say that the unity of the Australian workers does not go beyond the limits of material benefits. They are united, but only as much as this unity gives monetary advantages to every separate member of the union. And with the fate of the latter is on the side of the union only as long as he gets, or expects to get, any gain from the very fact of being a unionist. The consolatory exceptions to this general rule unfortunately are comparatively rare.

This fact of superficial unity is apparent in the conduct of separate persons as well as in the life of the whole organisation.

In the "North Queensland Register" of May 24 appeared a letter signed "Laborite." Mr. Laborite points out that, though he is a unionist, he failed to get any job through the union, whereupon he was compelled to apply

to the capitalist directly, and he was not disappointed. After this he mentioned that there are hundreds who expect to get employment through the union, but they expect in vain, and he called on all of them to vote for the Liberal Party.

What has one to say in regard to unionists like the abovementioned? Only, and only the words of Gospel: "God, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This "Laborite," of course, knows not where those contradictions come from—those contradictions that people starve through want of employment in the presence of unlimited riches. But if this is beyond his thinking abilities, why does not the simple fact trouble his mind—viz., the fact of his own experience?

He "found the capitalist's gates open" to him "on a living wage of £3

a week," but if those hundreds whom he called on to vote for the Liberal Party came to the gates where he found employment, what would they find there? They would find the gates shut very fast, and because the capitalist wanted one man and no more. What are hundreds of unemployed to the capitalist?

Besides, Mr. "Laborite" is apparently quite ignorant of where the "living wage of £3 a week" in Queensland comes from. Does he think it comes from the Liberals?

A striking example of the ignorance of some workmen and their insufficient unity was shown at Friezland during the recent disquieting time. When the war burst out the copper mines and smelters at Friezland were threatened with the fate of many other copper mines and smelters—i.e., full closing down for an indefinite time. Thanks, however, to clever management, the smelting works at Friezland were kept going, the crisis overcome, and at present they are working at full speed.

When the rumors of closing down the smelters first spread, uneasiness and even alarm became apparent. Meetings succeeded meetings, and they were crowded and visited by almost the whole population of Friezland. But it was only the fear of the threatened starvation that drove them to the meetings. This became obvious when the crisis passed away through the smelters being kept going. Meetings, etc.,

being kept going. Everyday life returned to its usual hum-drum way, and the union meetings became the most deserted of all the assemblages at Friesland. You could find people everywhere excepting at the union meetings.

Why? The menace of starvation had passed away. One got his wage punctually, and there is nothing like the "bobs." There was no common purpose or high ideal to call the working men together! The result that comes out of this state of affairs is the impotence of the union, as representative of the working people's interests.

Several non-unionists are still working here from the time of the last strike. Economically speaking, the non-unionist is the worst kind of *homo sapiens*. This is known to the masters as well as to their employees.

Unfortunately some laborers are united merely mechanically. The smallest impulse is likely to bring them out of their equilibrium and make them throw themselves to the Liberal's embrace, as the abovementioned "Laborite" in the "North Queensland Register."

The union has got a frame, but it lacks a soul. The Labor Government, as well as the leaders of unionism, are facing the greatest problem of the day, and that is to infuse a living soul into the dead body of unionism. How this can be best done is far beyond the limits of the ordinary newspaper article. One can say, though, that the Australian laborer is only as yet crusted with the great civilisation of England. The rich virgin soil of human nature is waiting for those who will cultivate it with love, inspired with the only ideal worth striving for in this young country—the ideal of a great and bright Australian future.

S. SUTCHKOFF.

Friesland.