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Title:
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AUSTRALIAN "LIBERALISM" - AND WHY I OPPOSE IT.

Australian "liberals" (with a capital "L") do not hold the beliefs of English "Liberalism" (with a small "l".) The great writers of the English "Liberal" tradition - John Stuart Mill and L.T.Hobhouse - were believers in liberty, and became, in effect, democratic socialists.

Australian "Liberals" are a breed all of their own and no authoritative statement of their beliefs is to be found. But from the arguments they use against their opponents I deduce that they believe as follows:-

- "1. "Free Enterprise" is a system of trade and commerce where all who engage in it, both buyers and sellers, are so numerous and compete so much with each other that no one has any control over the activities of anyone else, and the best service is automatically selected by the market.
- 2. This is an ideal system which exists in Australia today wherever the Government has not intervened.
- 3. Under "Free Enterprise" no one has any power over anyone else, so everyone is free. Where "Government enterprise" exists, the Government has power over people, and no-one is free."

In addition to these, Australian "Liberals" usually hold other more lunatic convictions in varying combinations. But I shan't bother with such nonsense, as they are not essential to the "Liberals'" fundamental tenets.

The "Free Enterprise" argument is quite unreal. A state of perfect competition, where buyers and sellers are so numerous that they cannot individually affect the market exists in hardly any sphere of trade or production today. Each section has formed a group to further its own interests - Unions, Employers Federations, Retail Trade Associations, etc. These groups can exercise very real power over us today. Moreover, in Australia the process of interlocking companies and company directorates has gone on to greater extent than in almost any other capitalist nation. Through this process Banking (and with it our credit and investment policy) Oil, Iron, Steel, Sugar and Brick Production and the bulk of the Australian Press is in the hands of a tiny coterie of individuals - company directors answerable for nothing but producing a dividend. In the absence of Govern-

ment intervention this small group can and does effectively control the nation's economy, and with it the lives and destinies of us all, and makes a useless sham of the decisions of the electors at the ballot box as to their own future. The motive for the decisions of this small group is not our welfare but their own private gain - and they are the greatest supporters of the Australian "Liberalism" I have described. You may well ask why it is called "Liberalism?" The answer is that they had to find a nice name to conceal something nasty.

The question facing Australia today is not "Free Enterprise" or "Government Enterprise?" It is whether the people should control the monopolists, or the monopolists control the people.

In short, I believe that there is only one essential difference between Australian "Liberalism" and Australian "Communism." The "Communists" are genuinely unselfish, and dangerously insane. The "Liberals" are genuinely selfish, and dangerously sane.