

## MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

### Manifesto of the Queensland Labour Party to the people of Queensland (dated 9 September 1892)

Ref N° 2008-10

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#### PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

##### 1 SUMMARY

(On 20 November 1918, the Queensland Labour Party changed its name to the Australian Labor Party – Queensland Branch. For consistency throughout this submission the spelling “Labor” is used to refer to the political party (with the exception of the title of the document, as above, and “Labour” to refer to the wider, non-parliamentary movement)

The *manifesto* can be described as one of the formative documents of the Australian Labor Party, providing a coverage of the party’s grievances, with a focus upon the ruling class of the time, including squatters, employers, the government and others that labour saw as opponents to its aims in terms of better working conditions and economic prosperity. Electoral and land reform as well as social equity are specific themes.

The *manifesto* stands as one of the planks upon which the Queensland and Australian labour movement developed, focusing on greater electoral success and wider parliamentary representation as a means of progressing its aims and aspirations.

Similar economic and social landscapes, reflected in conflict between labour and capital, existed in a number of other countries at the time of the writing of the *manifesto* and the progress of the labour movement in Queensland was followed in a number of countries, for instance, Britain. The various cross-influences between labour organisations and individuals, nationally and internationally, raise the significance and relevance of the *manifesto* beyond a purely Queensland based context. This is particularly the case in the context of the early achievements of the labour movement in Queensland. As pointed out by Professor Raymond Evans, quoted in full later in this submission, the importance of the Queensland labour movement in an international context, the subsequent claim to the formation of the first labour government in the world as well as the role of the *manifesto* can be confidently supported academically.

In view of this, the *manifesto* can be considered as being of significance beyond a national, to one of international significance. The *manifesto* was an important link in the chain of influences, actions and events that took place in Queensland during the 1890s, culminating with the formation of the first labour or social democratic government in the world, this being the Anderson Dawson government formed in December 1899.

In recognition of the *manifesto*’s significance within the Australian context, it was recently approved for inclusion on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

##### *Historical importance:*

As a means of documenting and authenticating the *manifesto*’s historical credentials, the assistance of Dr. Raymond Evans, Adjunct Professor, Centre for Public Culture and Ideas, at Griffith University, Brisbane has been sought.

His report, confirming the historical importance of the manifesto, is shown in full, in Section 4.1 hereunder.

## **2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR**

### 2.1 Name (person or organisation)

State Library of Queensland

### 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Custodian

### 2.3 Contact person (s)

Brian Randall,  
Manager, Heritage Information Services,  
Heritage Collections,  
State Library of Queensland

### 2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

State Library of Queensland  
Heritage Collections  
P.O. Box 3488  
South Brisbane Qld. 4101

Ph (07) 3842 9819 Fax: 3842 9126  
Email: brian.randall@slq.qld.gov.au

## **3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**

### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

Manifesto of the Queensland Labour party to the People of Queensland (dated 9 September 1892)

The *manifesto* can be viewed via the following link :

[http://enc.slq.qld.gov.au/logicrouter/servlet/LogicRouter?PAGE=object&OUTPUTXSL=object\\_enc36ui.xslt&pm\\_RC=REPOSLOEAD&pm\\_OI=44016&pm\\_GT=Y&pm\\_IAC=Y&api\\_1=GET\\_OBJECT\\_XML&num\\_result=0](http://enc.slq.qld.gov.au/logicrouter/servlet/LogicRouter?PAGE=object&OUTPUTXSL=object_enc36ui.xslt&pm_RC=REPOSLOEAD&pm_OI=44016&pm_GT=Y&pm_IAC=Y&api_1=GET_OBJECT_XML&num_result=0)

### 3.2 Description

Holographic manuscript, in the hand of Charles Seymour, the author. 9pp.

## **4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

### 4.1 Is authenticity established?

Yes. The *manifesto* came to the State Library from the descendants of Charles Seymour, one of the leading figures of the early Queensland labour movement.

Seymour is also widely cited in the relevant literature as the *manifesto's* author.

The *manifesto* has also been shown to and discussed with a number of interested senior labour figures, who are known to be knowledgeable of the party's history. The general consensus has been that this manuscript is the Queensland party's first *manifesto*. These labour representatives also reiterated the

belief, in terms of labour folklore, that the *manifesto* was read publicly under the Tree of Knowledge at Barcaldine, at some time following the Great Shearers' Strike.

As a further test of the document's authenticity, its physical attributes of the *manifesto*, including the ink and paper used, will be professionally examined as soon as practicable.

**Historical background of the Document** – report by Dr. Raymond Evans, Adjunct Professor, the Centre for Popular Culture and Ideas, Griffith University, Brisbane

“The document emerged out of the first Queensland Labour-in-Politics Convention held during August 1892. The twenty-four delegates present were drawn predominantly from waged-workers in the mining and shearing industries in the North and West of Queensland (19 members), with the rest representing Brisbane metropolitan trades-people and political aspirants. These delegates, in turn, elected an Executive Council of twelve members, whose immediate purpose was to plan strategies for contesting the 1893 colonial elections. The Manifesto ‘to the People of Queensland’, written by Charles Seymour directly following the Convention, was a crucial element in this process.

The manuscript was produced at a time in Queensland's history of extraordinary activism, conflict and working-class resolve. At a by-election in Bundamba, South East Queensland in May 1888, voters – many of whom were coal-miners – had elected the first Labour candidate in the Colony, Thomas Glassey, endorsed by the Bundamba Miners Association. In August 1889, in one of the world's first examples of international working-class solidarity, Brisbane wharf labourers initiated an Australia-wide campaign of financial aid for striking dock workers in London, ensuring them an historic victory. The workers' anthem, ‘The Red Flag’, emerged out of this struggle. By 1890, among a numerically small population of around 130 000 eligible voters, there were 21 380 trade unionists, grouped in 54 unions affiliated with the Australian Labour Federation (ALF), established in May 1889. Local industrial victories were recorded during 1889-90 by striking Brisbane bakers and boot-makers, and, most significantly, pastoral workers at Queensland's largest shearing establishment, Jondaryan Station. In March 1890, also, William Lane, the doughty, effervescent radical journalist, founded *The Worker* newspaper, which publicized the ideas of leading Continental, British and American socialists and became the most influential labour organ in the Australian colonies; while in May 1890 the American land-reformer, Henry George, visited Brisbane to lecture on the economic advantages of a single land tax.

The year 1890, then, was a high water-mark in the development of the Queensland labour movement. In August, the General Council of the ALF produced its first political manifesto, a Statement of Political Aims, calling for the nationalization of all sources of wealth and of all means of producing and exchanging wealth. It advocated state socialism and the equal distribution of resources among citizens, as well as child, invalid and aged pensions. Thus, like the 1892 Manifesto under consideration here, it was also a most significant historical document, influenced by Marxist thinking, and possibly the first political statement of state socialist intent drawn up by a nascent democratic parliamentary party. Reflecting the utopian optimism of these early years, it called for a thorough (indeed revolutionary) reorganization of society ‘to be commenced at once and pursued uninterruptedly until Social Justice is fully secured to each and every citizen’. In its strident tone, it bears the hallmark of the ideas and rhetorical style of William Lane. It was accompanied by a supplementary document, The People's Parliamentary Platform, that outlined a more pragmatic programme for electoral success – a full and equal adult franchise for white citizens, abolition of the nominated Legislative Council, annual parliaments and equal electoral districts. It thus owed more to the ideas of the British Chartist movement of the mid-nineteenth century than it did to the *Communist Manifesto*.

These two documents, in effect, represented the ideals of the two wings of the early labour movement, one revolutionary, idealistic and utopian; the other reformist, pragmatic and measured. Then, in December 1890, the composition of a new Labour Party was established by ALF representatives at Blackall in Western Queensland.

The closing months of 1890, however, heralded a reversal of fortunes. A disastrously waged inter-colonial maritime strike (August-October 1890) sapped both trade union finances and unionists' enthusiasm and commitment. Then, from January to July 1891, the first great shearers strike, involving over 10 000 bush-workers, convulsed the colony. In this dispute, where the forces of the State police

and military – as well as the financial and organizational resources of inter-colonial and international capital were employed successfully against the strikers, direct actionist tactics met with defeat. By mid-year, as the strike was lost, some 225 unionists had been imprisoned, including more than a score of trade union leaders, sentenced to long terms of incarceration at St Helena, an island penitentiary in Moreton Bay. By 1892, also, the colony, with its economic fortunes sliding since 1886, had been engulfed in a hugely destructive Australia-wide depression, as overseas investors withdrew funds and banks, building societies and businesses collapsed. Trade Union membership followed suit: By 1895, the 21 380 unionists of 1890 had fallen to a derisory 240; the 54 trade unions had shrunk to only seven.

It was, thus, in such an atmosphere of reversal and socio-economic tragedy that the People's Manifesto of September 1892 was written. Gone were all references to immanent nationalization. Instead, the emphases of the document highlight the troubled times – deprivation, unemployment, the declining welfare of farmers and workers, the enormous and rising public debt. Though a sense of class conflict and the nature of the class enemy is unincorporated in the language of the text – 'the Squattocracy and the heroes of Civilization', 'heaven born financiers', 'the land Gambler and the rack-renting slave-owning landlord', there is no reference to the great industrial struggles, lost and won, of the previous three years. In emphasizing the public debt, the ruinous expenditure on railways and the fear of labour competition from 'Coolies' and 'Kanakas', the Manifesto reflects wide-scale contemporary concerns. Railway policy and the threatened importation of Coolie labour had already lost the Conservative leader, Thomas McIlwraith, a colonial election in 1883. Overall, the document is composed in strident terms, polemical in the face of a collapsing social order. It warns against following the path of the United States into slavery, condemns the present mismanaged political system in Queensland and promises 'contented' lives and 'happy homes' to those following Labour's path of 'equal' political rights and social and economic justice. In a more cautious cultural atmosphere, it represents more the ideas of American radical thinkers, Henry George and Edward Bellamy, than the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It represented, too, the victory of practical, reformist proposals over the revolutionary demands of the 1890 Political Statement of Aims. It intended to curb colonial capitalism rather than to eliminate it.

Most of the Queensland labour leaders were recently arrived migrants from the United Kingdom, who thus reflected that nation's radical and socialist thought. Thomas Glassey, signatory to the document as President of the Queensland Labour Party, had arrived in Queensland in late 1884. He was, of necessity, a self-educated man, having been originally sent to work in Ireland as a linen weaver at the age of six years for one penny a day. By thirteen years of age he was working as a coal miner in Scotland and was eventually sacked and black-listed there following an attempt to unionize miners towards better work-place conditions and wages. He subsequently worked and agitated at Bedlington Colliery, Newcastle before migrating to Australia. As stated above, he became the first Labour member of Parliament in Queensland on 12 May 1888, and by 1892 was Chairman of the Queensland Central Executive of the Labour Party. By this time, there were three other Labour members in the Legislative Assembly: John Hoolan, another Irish-born radical and newspaper proprietor; Tommy Ryan, a pastoral worker from Barcaldine, active in the 1891 shearers' strike; and George Hall, a Wesleyan carpenter from Bundaberg. All had won their seats in by-elections and all would be unseated in the 1893 election that lay ahead. The writer of the Manifesto, Charles Seymour, was a Dublin-born seaman who had arrived in Queensland in 1880. In 1885, he had been instrumental in forming the Queensland branch of the Federated Seaman's Union of Australia. He was a trustee on the board of the *Worker* newspaper and had contributed articles to its early issues. He later became the newspaper's editor. In May 1889, he had been elected Secretary of the Brisbane District Council of the ALF. As one of the principal Queensland labour leaders of this period, Seymour lacked the literary abilities of William Lane, the intellectual brilliance of William Kidston and Andrew Fisher and the organisational capacities of Arthur Hinchcliffe and Matt Reid. Little is presently known of his early education or working life. Yet, he was an extremely active and influential member of the early labour movement. He might be best considered as being a dogged and loyal supporter of the workers' struggle, faithful, committed and industrious to the end.

In the aftermath of the Manifesto's production, the new Labour Party fielded forty-six candidates across 72 seats in the General Election of April-May 1893. Most were skilled and unskilled workers, many of whom were miners, with a smattering of shop-keepers, radical journalists and farmers, as well as one barrister. In its first election, the Labour Party won an impressive sixteen seats

and became the second-largest grouping in the Queensland Parliament – an informal opposition sitting on the cross-benches. For the most part, it represented voters in the north and west of the colony, with the least electoral success in metropolitan Brisbane and the farming districts of south-eastern Queensland. As the trade unions were by now in such disarray, this political achievement was quite a remarkable one. William Lane, in the meantime, had led over 1 000 socialists and trade unionists out of Australia and into an Aryan Utopian workers' colony in Paraguay that ultimately failed.

Control of the labour movement and Labour Party had fallen largely into the hands of the moderates and pragmatists. The Party won 34.33 percent of the actual vote in the 1893 election. In 1896, it repeated this performance, increasing its number of seats to twenty. Despite this success, however, it was now only the Parliamentary Labour Party with its affiliated Workers Political Organisations and Peoples Parliamentary Associations, along with the propagandist input of the *Worker* newspaper that held the labour movement together. In the 1899 election, Labour attained 35.47 percent of the actual vote, as against 49.34 percent for the Conservative Ministerialist Government. It won twenty-one seats from the 54 candidates it fielded. Yet, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1899, it was called on to form a government in its own right. This surprising turn of events was due to a split in the Conservative ranks over a railway extensions bill and the resignation of the Premier, James Dickson, after only narrowly winning a no-confidence motion. The new Labour Leader, Anderson Dawson, representing now the official opposition in the Legislative Assembly, was called upon by Lieutenant Governor Samuel Griffith, to form a Government. This administration, although only surviving for seven days and for four hours on the actual floor of Parliament, was hailed by contemporaries as the first Labour Government in the world. It understandably achieved very little but was able, after the swearing-in of Ministers, to examine evidence of substantial corruption in the Conservative Administration of the Colony and later to capitalise on this knowledge. It also contained within its ranks a future Queensland Premier, William Kidston and three- times Labour Prime Minister of Australia, Andrew Fisher. It fell when Liberal MPs refused to support Dawson's motion for an adjournment of the House and the Conservatives closed ranks behind a new leader, Robert Philp.

The claim by contemporaries and by many subsequent historians that Dawson's seven days in December 1899 represents the first Labour Government in the world can be confidently supported academically. Five years later, in 1904, when J.C. Watson formed a minority Labour Government in the Federal Parliament, it was recognised as the first *national* Labour Government in the world. In other countries, Labour Parties were generally slower in forming and attaining Government. The Norwegian Labour Party, for instance, had only four candidates in the *Storting* (Parliament) by 1904 and the Netherlands Labour Party was not founded until 1946. In the United Kingdom, a Labour Party as such did not exist until 1906. It did not become even the main opposition party until 1922, and formed the first minority Labour Government in 1924, lasting eleven months. On the centenary of Anderson Dawson's historic achievement, in December 1999, a motion in the British House of Commons paid an appropriate tribute. This stated:

*That this House celebrates the centenary of the world's first Labour Government: and notes that on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1899 Anderson Dawson MP was sworn in as the Labour Premier of Queensland, Australia, thereby giving confidence to emerging Labour Parties throughout the globe and beginning the process for a century of social advancement, dignity and justice for hundreds of millions of working people, delivered upon by future Labour Government.*

The then Labor Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, added that the occasion commemorated 'the beginning of a major change in democracy...Anderson Dawson's political opponents in 1899 were elitist and privileged...Importantly, the Dawson administration proved that Labor could form Government'. The Queensland Government marked the occasion by staging a Community Cabinet meeting in Charters Towers, the old electorate of Anderson Dawson. As part of the celebrations, a short play entitled 'The Young Giants', which saluted the outstanding contribution of the first labour leaders, was performed.

Raymond Evans (10 March 2008)

4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established?

The first labour government in the world is widely cited in the relevant literature as being the Anderson Dawson labour government, formed in Queensland in December 1899. The *manifesto* can be argued to have played an important role in the process, capturing the sentiments of the period leading to the formation of this first labour government.

The early labour successes in Queensland are said to have been closely followed in a number of other countries, in particular in Britain. It can be argued that there would also have been a wide awareness of the *manifesto* and its importance, in terms of the achievement of these successes,

Some specific instances of this wider awareness Queensland and Australian labour achievements, during the 1890s, are as follows:

- In 1895, Fred Hammill of the Fabian Society referred to the Australian and Queensland labour experience, when arguing before the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress to initiate the formation of an independent labour party.
- At the 1905 (British) Labour Representation Committee conference Isaac Mitchell referred to Australian and Queensland labour as a model for the British party.
- During 1906 to 1908 two important British Labour Party members, Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, separately visited Australia, and became aware of the achievements of the labour movement.

As previously outlined, at the time the *manifesto* was written, similar economic and social conditions existed in a number of other countries. For instance, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States faced similar economic and social upheaval with labour movements in these countries evolving along similar lines. Those involved in the various labour movements would, it can logically be argued, would have maintained on-going contacts through various formal and informal channels. This on-going contact and exchange would have ensured a wide awareness of the labour movement's Queensland and Australian successes.

Shared influences, ideas and assistance within international labour movements were significant at the time and periodically emerged as direct encouragement and support between countries. By way of example, the labour movement in Australia contributed some £30,000 to assist the strikers during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century London Dock Strike.

This international sharing of ideas, influence and support is also evidenced by the movement of prominent labour figures between countries, for instance from Britain to Australian locations such as Queensland. Prominent amongst these was the signatory of the *manifesto*, Thomas Glassey, who had worked as a miner in Scotland and northern England where he had organised unions of miners. Prior to his emigration to Queensland and his pivotal involvement in the Queensland labour movement, Glassey had also taken an active role in British local government elections and had assisted in returning Mr Thomas Burt, said to be the first “working man” to enter the House of Commons.

Please also refer to the report by Dr Raymond Evans, reproduced in Section 4.1 above, and which confirms much of the forgoing argument.

The *manifesto*, surviving from an early and formative period of the Queensland labour movement, and by association, surviving as a representative document from the early international labour movement, is argued to be a unique, important and irreplaceable document.

4.3 Is one *or more* of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style satisfied?.

Time:

The *manifesto* was written at a time of political and social upheaval in Queensland. The labour movement, following a number of significant setbacks and defeats decided to pursue a greater electoral role and wider parliamentary representation as an alternative to industrial action to progress its aims. This scenario was also being played out in a number of other countries and the events taking place in Queensland, would have had significance for labour figures in other countries, just as Queensland labour figures were aware of what was happening elsewhere.

Therefore, the *manifesto*, as a surviving document from the period when many labour movements were experimenting with alternatives to protest and strike action by seeking to achieve greater success through the ballot box, is rare, if not unique.

#### Place:

This submission details the wide belief, stated in a range of published sources, that the Anderson Dawson government, formed in Queensland in December 1899, was the world's first labour government. Therefore, in terms of place, the *manifesto*, as part of the political process that took place in Queensland and led to the formation of this first labour government, can be argued to have an important, if not unique place in Queensland, Australian and world labour history.

#### People:

Charles Seymour (1853 – 1924), the author of the *manifesto*, was a prominent and vocal member of the Queensland labour movement and held a number of important executive positions.

Thomas Glassey, at the time the president of the party and the signatory of the *manifesto*, had worked as a miner in Scotland and northern England where he gained prominence in the local labour movement, organising unions of miners. Additionally, prior to his emigration to Queensland and his pivotal involvement in the Queensland labour movement, he had taken an active part in local government elections and had assisted in returning Mr Thomas Burt, as the first “working man” to enter the House of Commons.

There were many others involved in the formation and evolution of the Queensland Labor Party, as is the case today, would have had various networks within Australian and overseas labour movements, sharing ideas and influences as well as providing various forms of assistance.

#### Subject and Theme:

The State Library holds the surviving records of the Queensland Labor Party, including material from the formative period of the 1890s. As such, the collection forms a valuable and important record of Queensland's political development, relevance for Australia as a nation as well as importance in terms of the development of labour movements internationally.

In terms of political material held by the State Library, the Labor Party is by far the largest and most extensive. This large and varied collection reflects both the long history of the labour movement in Queensland and is evidence of the party interest in and regard for its own history. The survival of the *manifesto* provides researchers with a rare opportunity to examine and study an important record of the aspirations, views and beliefs of the early labour movement here in Queensland, with significant application to the wider national and international labour movement.

#### Form and Style:

The *manifesto* has similarities to other political manifestos written at the time. These similarities include style, structure, content and appearance

Examples provided are as follows :

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1847) *The Communist manifesto* (published anonymously in London in 1848)
2. Australian Labour Federation *A statement of political aims* (1890)
3. Gladstone's *Address to the electors of Midlothian* (1885)
4. The Independent Labour Party *Labour; its politics and ideals* (written by J. Galsier ,1903)

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination? (

None known or expected

## **5 LEGAL INFORMATION**

5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Library Board of Queensland as the legal entity in administrative control of the State Library of Queensland

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

State Library of Queensland

5.3 Legal status:

- (a) Category of ownership – Full ownership
- (b) Accessibility – available for reference purposes
- (c) Copyright status – Author in perpetuity
- (d) Responsible administration – State Library of Queensland
- (e) Other factors

## **6 MANAGEMENT PLAN**

6.1 Is there a management plan in existence for this documentary heritage? YES/NO

If yes, attach a summary of the plan. If no, please attach further details about current storage and custody of the materials.

Yes – managed in line with the State Library of Queensland's normal collection management policies and procedures

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional *Memory of the World* committee

Some consultation has been undertaken with the Queensland Labor Party regarding the importance of the *manifesto*. All those consulted have confirmed the belief within the Australian Labor Party that the *manifesto* is of special significance and important to the study of labour movements in general.

**PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION**

**8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK**

8.1 Detail the nature and scope of threats to this documentary heritage

None known or expected

**9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION**

9.1 Detail the preservation context of the documentary heritage

In good condition and stored under appropriate environmental conditions. The State Library’s repositories meet international standards for the preservation of cultural materials.

**PART C - LODGEMENT**

This nomination is lodged by:

(Please print name).....

(Signature)..... (Date).....28.03.2008.....