At the Brünn Party Conference in 1899 our Austrian comrades passed a resolution to undertake a revision of the programme they adopted at Hainfield in 1888. A commission, consisting of comrades Adler, Daszynski, Ellenboggen, Schuhmeier and Steiner, was entrusted with this task. The result of their work was published at the end of August and put forward for criticism by party members.

As Victor Adler informs us in the Vienna *Worker Times* of 22 September, the wish of the Austrian comrades to revise the Party programme arose ‘far less from a principled or practical than from a formal, one could almost say an aesthetic, need’. The old Hainfield programme consists of a statement of principles and two resolutions, one of which deals with political rights and the other with labour protection legislation, in a fashion that, in some respects, no longer corresponds to contemporary views. The principles have not changed but the fighting proletariat no doubt has a heightened sense of its power and its confidence as to what it can wring from the present-day state has grown. On the other hand, other resolutions are to be added to these two. In Brünn in 1899 our fraternal party decided upon a nationalities programme; in Graz a kind of agrarian programme was adopted by the Congress of the German party organisation; a municipal programme is being worked out: in view of all these changes the wish to refashion the demands of the programme on some other points and to standardise them is understandable.

We do not wish to talk about this side of the amended programme here. But the committee also deemed it necessary to alter the statement of principles, although our principles have in no way changed, merely in order to prevent misinterpretations in one or another point or to remove a few blemishes for aesthetic reasons.

One wonders whether this constitutes sufficient grounds to subject the statement of principles, which stands at the head of every socialist programme, to a change. What distinguishes our programme from all bourgeois programmes is not the individual demands but this statement of principles. It contains the ‘ultimate aim’ and the reasons that inspire our efforts. It has very important practical, and not merely decorative, functions to fulfil. It does not, as some latter-day socialists believe, have the same

---

significance for us as does a holy icon for the peasant, who keeps it in his home and ritually makes the sign of the cross and lights his candle in front of it without ever giving it a thought in his practical activity. It has rather the great practical task of maintaining the unity of the proletarian movement.

And this in two ways. The more the proletarian movement grows, the more does the division of labour develop in it. Various functions fall to persons who occupy themselves exclusively with them and for whom these means to an end turn only too easily into ends in themselves. The more the various aspects of the proletarian movement become independent, the more easily friction and contradiction arise between them and this can very often sap the strength of the whole movement. This danger can be more easily overcome, the more alive are the ideas of all the participants about the ultimate aim – and everything in practical everyday work and detail work should contribute to this – and the more unified the conception of the ultimate aim.

But this has to bring unity, not only between the different functions, but also between the successive phases, of the proletarian movement. Every fluctuation in social and political life redounds upon this movement and the less solidly grounded in theory is its ultimate aim, the more dependent it becomes upon the conjuncture, public opinion and the fashion of the day. Those who most proudly parade their independence from all ‘dogma’ and ‘received opinion’ are the very ones who can be shoved around most recklessly by the currents of the time, ecstatic one day, suicidal the next, mocking the Marxists today from the anarchist standpoint as petty-bourgeois, armchair revolutionaries and denouncing the same Marxists tomorrow as Blanquists since they aren’t all wrapped up in a cooperative store.

A solidly structured programme with a clear final aim puts a strong rein on this kind of zigzag course. The politicians of fashion and opinion occasionally experience it as a fetter, moan about dogmatic fanaticism, and equate the theorems of the programme with the articles of faith of the Catholic Church, but afterwards, when the fashion is past and the party, unwavering, has moved further along the road to its destination, they acquiesce in it.

But if the preservation of the unity of the movement is viewed as one of the functions of the ultimate aim and of our programme’s statement of principles, then it already follows that patching up a statement of principles just for the sake of a few blemishes contradicts its purpose for no compelling reason.

In my opinion there are only two reasons that might lead a Social Democratic party to change the part of its programme that deals with principles if it is well thought out and precisely drafted. One is a fundamental change in its structure that must also be given public expression. That is especially the case where two quarrelling factions join forces. They won’t set off without a new programme, even though it may not differ fundamentally from the previous programmes. Only a new programme can show that this is a new organisation, that one organisation has not been swallowed up in the