Marilyn Dodkin

M.A. (Fass)

1990
CHARLIE OLIVER - A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY

The subject of this political biography is Cecil (Charlie) Thompson Oliver, a Welsh immigrant, who rose to become one of the most important men in New South Wales politics. This thesis will examine Oliver's ascendancy, from being an opposition back bencher in Western Australia, to a position of great power as N.S.W. Branch Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union and later President of the Labor Party in New South Wales. This biography concentrates on the period from 1950 to 1972 and discusses the major events during that period in which Oliver played a leading role.

Oliver's elevation was engineered by Tom Dougherty, the General Secretary of the A.W.U. Dougherty, who ruled his kingdom like a medieval prince, chose Oliver because he needed a trustworthy ally to defend his kingdom. At first Oliver is merely a shadow of his prince, but later he achieved his own political power. Their relationship is an integral part of the thesis.

They were a grand alliance and entered into a battle to gain control of the N.S.W. Branch of the Labor Party, firstly from the left wing, and then from the so called 'groupers'. When this battle was won Oliver took his place on the Central Executive of the N.S.W. Labor Party, whilst Dougherty remained an outsider. Oliver turned his energies to restoring the Labor Party so
that it could win government and in the process became a pragmatic leader. Subsequently, his relationship with Dougherty changed as Dougherty's obsession to abolish the Legislative Council led to Labor losing control of the Upper House. Dougherty's bombastic relationship with the Labor Party contrasts strongly with Oliver's constructive conciliatory methods throughout the period. They shared, however, a ruthless determination to destroy their enemies.

Oliver was President of the N.S.W Branch of the Labor Party for a decade from 1960 to 1970. In his dual roles as Union Secretary and Party President he had great power. He served on the Federal Executive and was one of the 'thirty six faceless men' formulating Labor policy. This biography examines whether Oliver's commitment was greater to the Labor Party or the A.W.U. and whether the Union or the Party benefited more from the relationship.

In 1969 when younger men took advantage of Oliver's complacency he became a captive of a hostile Union Executive and lost control. This, together with agitation in the Party for a new image, caused him to abdicate from the Presidency in 1970. During this humiliating period Dougherty supported Oliver. Ironically Dougherty died just prior to Labor's victory and Oliver's triumph in regaining control of the Union.
Chapter 1 - Fortune.

'I judge it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, but that she leaves the control of the other half, or almost that, to us.'(1)

Fortune decreed that Cecil (Charlie) Thompson Oliver was too young for the First World War and almost too old for the second. Charlie was born in Bangor, North Wales on 23 December 1901.(2) The British Empire was then at the height of its power and Queen Victoria was at the end of her long reign. Australia was an infant nation, approaching its first anniversary and still tied to the Crown and the British Parliament, both legally and emotionally.

Early in Charlie's life his family moved to the border town of Chester, where he attended an Anglican school, and later to Liverpool. When war came his father and elder brother joined the Army. With an ever diminishing labour force Charlie obtained an exemption to leave school at thirteen to work as a farm labourer. When he was fifteen, and as the war machine craved armaments, Charlie became a steel worker.(3)
After the war there was talk of the family emigrating to Canada but instead Charlie and his elder brother left the '..land fit for heroes', a term which Oliver said no one believed, to chance their lives in 'God's country.' Their original plan was to settle in Newcastle, where they could work in the steel mills, but after six weeks at sea they left the ship at the first Australian landfall - Albany. A quixotic decision to take the train to the end of the line brought the brothers to the remote Western Australian gold mining community of Meekatharra.(4)

Charlie described Meekatharra as a rough physical environment where the warmth of the people made up for the lack of facilities. His involvement in Labor Party politics and union committees began in Meekatharra. He became a member of the Australian Workers' Union when the loosely formed Miners' Federation, metal mining not coal, was taken over in 1923 by the Western Australian Branch of the Union. In his later years Oliver questioned the legality of this action.(5) However, this view was in hindsight and was probably not questioned at the time when the philosophy of one big union was at its zenith. Radical ideas for one big union, which would replace existing unions, did not sit easily with the moderate A.W.U. The Union opposed the concept of a Workers Industrial Union of Australia. It followed a policy of amalgamating with other unions in order to make itself the largest and strongest union.(6) The A.W.U. had no intention of allowing another organisation to become the largest union in the southern hemisphere.

The Australian Workers' Union, as its name depicts, was not an offshoot of British craft unions or professional associations, but was born in Victoria.
in 1886 as the Australasian Shearers' Union. The founding President, William Guthrie Spence, built the Union into a considerable force and is blamed by some historians for the 1890 Maritime Strike. (7) Spence had also been the Secretary of the Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria, (8) but that Union had never amalgamated with the Shearers' Union. In 1894, the General Labourers and Shed Hands Union, the unskilled workers of the pastoral industry, amalgamated with the Shearers' Union to become the Australian Workers' Union. The A.W.U. was registered under the Commonwealth Arbitration Act in 1904 with Branches in all States. The various State Branches were individually registered under State Industrial legislation. (9)

Oliver was a member of the Farm Labourers' and then the Steel Workers' Union in Great Britain, so his commitment to trade unionism was already forged before coming to Australia. Working conditions in the gold mines were tough with little mechanisation. Oliver recalled negotiations with the mine manager so the men could have wash bowls and Union agitation to have the miners tested for silicosis by the Commonwealth Laboratories. A disease which he was to suffer from later in life. (10) During those years Oliver helped establish the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. (11)

Later as a transient worker, taking any job that paid well, Oliver did fencing work on properties. He met and married a squatter's daughter and subsequently bought a small holding which he kept viable by taking a job in the mines. Although serving as a Union delegate he said he could not afford
to be a paid official on the lowly wage of eight pounds a week. As a farmer he was a 'successful failure'.

Charlie was thirty-eight when the Second World War broke out. He battled to get into the infantry. During his training he was found to have leg injuries from his mining days and was medically discharged from the Army. Fortune had destined his future to be in a different field of conflict.

In May 1942, despite the wages, he took a position as an Organiser for the Australian Workers' Union. When the election came around he would not participate in handing out ballot papers, because he was conscious that union ballots were often rorted. It might also have been that his sense of self-worth was such that he knew he was the better candidate. He was elected with a good majority and this was the beginning of his charmed electoral run which continued for most of his career.

Over the next few years Oliver consolidated his reputation as an organiser on the goldfields and became Secretary of the Mining Branch of the Union. He became a skilled industrial negotiator winning disputes, many of which he says were inspired by slavic migrants. In 1948 Oliver accepted the offer of the safe Labor seat of Boulder when Phil Collier, a former Premier, died. Collier had held the seat for nearly fifty years. Oliver won the by-election by an overwhelming majority. His opponent was the young U.A.P. candidate, Billie Snedden, who polled 450 votes coming second, with an independent trailing with even less votes. As Oliver put it 'I got the
rest'. Oliver was now a back bencher in the Labor Opposition in the Western Australian Parliament.

Labor had been in power since 1924, apart from a three year period during the depression. The loss of government in 1947 had been a great shock to the Party. During the early years the Labor Government had ensured that all workers on public relief were members of a union, which benefited the A.W.U. with its coverage of unskilled workers. As the Union membership increased so did its influence in the General Council of the Party. The alliance of Labor and the Union was beneficial to both organisations. The Union provided organisational strength and financial backing.

The Union supported the Western Australian electoral system which provided for rural weighting. It was this system which, together with the Union's organisation in the mining and rural seats, gave the Party its electoral strength. Two thirds of Labor politicians, from both Houses, were from these seats. Consequently the Union dominated the Party.

During this period there was no separate trade union peak council. The political and trade union wings of the labour movement were looked after by the General Council of the Party. The affiliated Unions provided the strength of the Party. Membership from the Party's branches was at an extraordinarily low figure. In 1922 it was only 0.92% of total membership rising to 2.55% in 1948. The affiliated Unions provided the majority of the membership and the A.W.U. was the largest Union.
When Oliver became a politician his life changed. He went from the hurley burley of trade union life on the goldfields to a seat on the Opposition back bench. The Liberal Country Party Government's Redistribution Act in August 1948 created three new metropolitan seats. This, together with the abolition of the old mining zone and the seat of Roebourne in the North West, made it harder for Labor to regain power. As well the A.W.U. membership was no longer as strong and its influence was waning. At the same time militant trade unions were pressing for their own council. At the 1950 election Labor's vote increased but it did not regain office. Life on the Opposition backbench, although secure, did not give Charlie the job satisfaction that he experienced as a Union organiser. In later years he said he was not cut out for the flash leather benches. The Union was his greatest love. It was then that fortune took a hand.
Chapter 2 - The Prince.

'And here it is to be noted that a prince should avoid ever joining forces
with one more powerful than himself against others unless necessity compels
it.'(1)

In 1950 Charlie Oliver had been an ally of the ruling prince of the
Australian Workers' Union, General Secretary Tom Dougherty, for some years.
Oliver had been an Executive Councillor since 1946 and a delegate to
Convention in 1948(2) and had always supported Dougherty. The Executive
Council, the supreme body governing the Federal Union, comprised two
delegates from each State Branch plus the General Secretary and President of
the Federal Union.(3) The Council was only answerable to the Annual
Convention of elected delegates. However, the reality was that whoever
controlled the numbers on the Executive Council controlled the Union.
Dougherty had the numbers and intended to keep his power but there were
forces working against him. He chose Oliver as Branch Secretary of New
South Wales to help him defend his kingdom.

Since 1944 the New South Wales Branch had been under the control of the
Executive Council. Although Dougherty's opponents had taken prolonged Court
action against this control, the Court had upheld the decision of the Executive Council. By 1950 Tom Dougherty had been General Secretary of the Union for seven years but was still under attack by the former General Secretary Clarrie Fallon who, according to Oliver was '...trying to bury Dougherty.'(4) Both Dougherty and Fallon were from the Queensland Branch. In 1949 Dougherty was challenged in the election for General Secretary by R.W. Wilson, the appointed New South Wales Secretary. In the ballot Wilson polled 15694 to Dougherty's 19237.(5) It was a handy springboard for a future challenge.

In order to protect his future position Dougherty sought to destroy Wilson. At a Special Executive Council meeting in January 1950, before Annual Convention at which the ballot would be declared, Dougherty used his numbers to ensure that Wilson would not be a threat to him in the future. Oliver was the executioner who fired the bullets to destroy Wilson.

Dougherty and Oliver believed that Fallon had been the master mind, in the campaign to elect Wilson as General Secretary, in the Federal ballot in 1969.(6) Oliver moved that the ballot in New South Wales was irregular and should be declared invalid. After considerable debate the Chairman ruled that the matter be adjourned for further evidence.(7) Oliver states that Fallon looked terrible as his plans fell apart and when the meeting ended went back to his hotel room and over indulged in brandy and became very ill.(8) The Union's journal, the Worker, whilst not mentioning the brandy, reported that Fallon was '..removed in the middle of the night to the Mater hospital at North Sydney where he died of a brain haemorrhage in the
afternoon." (9)

When news of Fallon's death reached the Executive Council a resolution was moved that the President attend the burial. There was no minute's silence, no words of regret and debate on the New South Wales ballot was resumed. Oliver and Dougherty moved that Executive Council appoint a new delegation to Annual Convention from New South Wales. (10) Dougherty did not take the chance that even from the grave Fallon's numbers might control Convention.

The third day of Executive Council Dougherty and Oliver, having declared the New South Wales Branch ballot invalid, performed the coup de grâce with a resolution that the Executive Council 'will continue its control over the affairs of the New South Wales Branch.' The General President and General Secretary were to run the Branch until a further ballot was held. A further resolution questioning the validity of the ballot for Federal Executive positions decided that a Commonwealth wide investigation would take place to report back to Council. (11) As the ballot had been conducted by the Union's Returning Officer the investigation would be conducted internally. The prince had buried one enemy, Fallon, and wounded Wilson by the implication that the election in New South Wales had been rorted. All that remained was a decent interval before he installed his own man as Branch Secretary.

Dougherty let the matter rest for a year before it was discussed again at Executive Council. During that year there was a State election in Western Australia which Labor again lost (12). Oliver was still an opposition back
bencher. In February 1951 the Executive Council declared the New South Wales ballot null and void and took a vote to appoint a temporary New South Wales Branch Secretary until the next meeting of Council. Dougherty’s pick for the job was George Burns, a New South Wales Organiser. Oliver nominated Burns but Dougherty’s pick, R.W. Wilson, was also nominated. Burns received one vote and Wilson was elected temporary Secretary. (13) If Dougherty was testing the numbers with this temporary position he certainly had his answer; George Burns could not command the vote. It was also a delaying tactic so that Convention would not have an opportunity to appoint a new Branch Secretary.

The 1951 Annual Convention followed the Council meeting and delegates were addressed by Dr. Herbert Vere Evatt, then the Deputy Leader of the Party, and Senator Pat Kenneally, Federal Secretary of the Party. Dougherty moved the vote of thanks and Oliver, who had only been a Delegate once before in 1948, was given the opportunity to second the motion. Oliver used the opportunity to question Evatt as to why the Union was not represented on the Labor Advisory Council. He reminded Evatt that the Union had built up the Party in Western Australia. (14)

It should be realised that at this period the Union was the largest in the southern hemisphere with a membership of 165,000. It had great power and chose not to affiliate with the A.C.T.U. In fact there was great rivalry between the two organisations with constant sniping between Dougherty and A.E. Morley, President of the A.C.T.U. (15) Oliver’s speech resulted in the Labor Party Conference in April inviting the Union to send a representative
to the Labor Advisory Council. Within a short while the A.C.T.U. had withdrawn from that body and the Labor Federal Executive was forced to disband the Council. The Sydney Morning Herald editorial said Chifley had been optimistic in expecting the A.W.U. and A.C.T.U. to work in harmony. (16)

Oliver returned to Western Australia and it is during this period that Dougherty must have decided that he wanted Oliver in New South Wales. In later years Oliver tells the tale that he gave up the possibility of being a future Premier of Western Australia because Dougherty needed him to clear up the mess in New South Wales. (17) It is doubtful that Oliver had any chance of becoming Premier. The reality was that Labor was out of power and the left wing of the Party were gaining ground. (18) He had no ministerial experience and Labor had a new leader when former Premier F.J.S. Wise resigned from the Parliament in June 1951, leaving the way clear for his deputy A.R.G. Hawke, to take the leadership and eventually become Premier. (19)

By the time the Executive Council met on 29th June 1951 Dougherty and Oliver had a deal. The first business of the meeting was to appoint a N.S.W. Branch Secretary. There were two nominations, Oliver and Wilson. Oliver did not take part in the vote, but won nine votes to two. Presumably the two votes against him were from the nominator and seconder of Wilson. (20)

It had taken Dougherty eighteen months to install his own man as Secretary of the New South Wales Branch. Furthermore that man was an outsider and not
very well known in New South Wales. Oliver stated he came because Dougherty needed him but that he only meant to stay for four years as he had a deal with Golding, the Western Australian Branch Secretary, to take over from him when he retired. (21)

Oliver left his wife and son, who was studying at the School of Mines. The four-year period extended to a lifetime and apart from annual holidays in the early years he never lived with them again. Charlie's sacrifice of his family for the prince was rewarded with the one thing that was lacking in his life as a backbencher - the adrenaline of power.
Chapter 3 - The Arrival.

'Those private citizens who become princes through Fortune alone do so with little effort...they meet no obstacles along their way since they fly to success, but all their problems arise when they have arrived...these are the men who are granted a state either because they have money or because they enjoy the favor of him who grants it.'(1)

The Australian Labor Party was in mourning for Ben Chifley when Oliver was appointed New South Wales Branch Secretary on 29th June 1951. He wasted no time in resigning from Parliament and arrived in Sydney from the West in early August.(2) His salary was set at thirteen hundred pounds per annum with two hundred and fifty pounds as an allowance.(3) Dougherty heralded Oliver's appointment acknowledging that he was leaving a safe Labor seat and praising him for his qualities as '...a fearless and capable Union Official. His experience, ability and courage will be given to the maximum in the interests of the members.'(4) The Branch, however, was still under the control of Executive Council until such time as branch elections were called. The reality was that Dougherty was still in charge.

The New South Wales Branch had been registered under the Trade Union Act, 1881 and its Certificate of Registration was dated 7th July 1899.(5)
Charlie's daunting task was to revitalise this historic Branch with the eventual aim of restoring its sovereignty. This achievement would then allow Oliver to stand as a Vice President of the Executive Council and be in a position to support Dougherty on that body. The Executive Council had divided New South Wales into six districts with organising district secretaries reporting to Oliver.(6)

As a relative unknown to the membership in New South Wales Charlie needed to establish a high profile, prior to the election, in order to win the confidence of the members. Shortly after his arrival Oliver gained the headlines by attacking the Menzies Government proposal to close the Glen Davis shale oil plant, which had been set up during the war to extract oil. His experience as Mining Branch Secretary in Western Australia gave him the knowledge to castigate the Menzies Government for their short sightedness. He used the issue of the Glen Davis plant closure to call for a Royal Commission insinuating there were profiteers behind the move.(7) In doing so he won the support and the future votes of the miners facing dismissal.

Oliver also had to win the confidence of the shearers. He recognised he had no expertise in the shearing industry but showed his concern for the shearers by beginning a drive for better standards of accommodation. Oliver's reports in the Worker highlighted the fact that the Union was forcing pastoralists to provide proper accommodation by arranging for Government inspectors to visit properties which were not up to standard under the Rural Workers' Accommodation Act.(8)
There was still the problem of Wilson's supporters who sought an early election for the New South Wales Branch. Given Wilson's good vote in the 1949 ballot against Dougherty (9) these dissidents would have had every reason to believe he had a good chance of winning another election, provided Oliver did not have too long to consolidate his position. When Oliver had been appointed Wilson had been given the South Western district to organise. (10) This kept him far away from Sydney and Oliver.

In January 1952 the dissidents had begun a Court action to force Dougherty into calling an early election for New South Wales. Rank and file member Thomas Heslop took an action in the Arbitration Court against rule changes which had been made by the Executive Council in September 1951. Heslop alleged the rules were "tyrannical and oppressive". Mr. Justice Kirby gave an order against the Union and its Executive Council to show cause why the Annual Convention should not be declared invalid and amendments to rules 37 and 64 be disallowed. The order was returnable to the Court by 12 March 1952. Union officials admitted that the amended rules allowed the Council to take control of any matter affecting any of the Branches of the Union and to delay an election for the New South Wales Branch until December 1952. (11)

It is doubtful whether Heslop was supported by the communists or other left wing forces. However, legal fees would have had to be met and some group was providing the finance. Possibly that support came from the last remnants of Fallon's forces, from the Queensland Branch, still fighting for control of the Executive Council. The case was eventually withdrawn on the assurance by the Executive Council that the New South Wales Branch election
would take place no later than the triennial elections in December 1952. (12)

Many years later Heslop was to oppose a resolution supporting Dougherty's and Oliver's actions in working to rid the Labor Party of 'Movement' elements working to destroy Labor policies and principles. (13) This makes it more likely that Heslop came from the far right of the Party, possibly even a supporter of the industrial groups. Therefore, his earlier efforts against Dougherty and Oliver were unlikely to have been instigated by the left wing and it is more likely that they were an anti-Dougherty right wing group.

In March 1952 Dougherty and the Executive Council changed the boundaries of the districts from six to five. The South Western district was enlarged but the District Secretary was no longer R.W. Wilson. (14) Whether or not Wilson had been behind the Court case he was the one who had the most to gain from an early election for the New South Wales Branch. Dougherty, undoubtedly with Oliver's backing, did not allow Wilson the luxury of an official position to act as a springboard to launch another challenge.

Politically Oliver's arrival had given Dougherty an ally in his power struggle to gain control of the New South Wales Labor Party Executive. Charlie's recollections of that time were that he immediately became involved in the political field and that 'Dougherty was a big wheel in the Labor Party in those years.' (15) Oliver was taking an apprenticeship in power politics from an expert player intent on controlling the game.
At the 1952 Annual Convention in Mackay, Queensland, Dougherty fired a broadside at the ruling clique of New South Wales Labor. Dougherty warned the Delegates that the Party was in danger of becoming "...a plaything of careerists and self-seeking adventurers" who were ignoring Party policy regarding the abolition of upper houses. Dougherty told the delegates he had been a member of the Central Executive of the N.S.W. Labor Party for eighteen months and that more than half of the Executive were union officials, who were also members of the Legislative Council. This "...small coterie..." undemocratically promoted their own candidates to the Council in order to ensure that they could block any moves to abolish their positions of privilege. (16)

Dougherty's accused the ruling clique of feathering their own nests in order to keep their five hundred pounds a year and gold pass for free transport and other benefits. (17) At a time when there were moves to increase the working week from forty to forty-four hours, together with a ten percent wage reduction, (18) whilst workers were struggling to keep up with rising inflation and the quarterly adjustment constantly lagged behind the cost of living, (19) the contrast between workers and Legislative Council members was stark. These underlying tensions may well explain Dougherty's savage attack.

Oliver, the beneficiary of Dougherty's patronage, was willing to back his prince and attacked the Labor Party for not abolishing upper houses of parliament when they had a majority. Dougherty supported the resolution. (20) In answering critics of the motion Oliver said excuses
about constitutional difficulties were not good enough. His reasoning:

"...if that were so they should have been honest enough to go to
the people by a referendum to amend the Constitution to provide
for dissolution of the Senate." (21)

It was an illogical argument considering that at that time only four out of
twenty-four referenda had been successful. (22)

Dougherty's paranoia about Upper House politicians was rooted in the old
fear of the industrial wing that the Party had been taken over by
parliamentarians and that the trade union movement, which had given birth to
the Party, had lost control. His obsession about abolition echoed the past.
As far back as 1916 the Union, disillusioned by the Holman Labor
Government's failure to control prices whilst workers faced a wage freeze
and escalating unemployment (23) moved a censure motion, at the N.S.W. Labor
Conference, against Holman for his Government's failure to carry out Labor's
platform to abolish the Legislative Council. (24) Although a compromise was
achieved within a few months the conscription issue then exploded, resulting
in the expulsion of Holman and other conscriptionists from the Labor
Party. (25) Ironically this lesson of history was not learned by Dougherty
whose obsession would damage the unity of the Labor Party at a later date.

Dougherty's fear of politicians gaining control also showed in a move, at
the Mackay Convention, to bar politicians from holding official positions in
the Union. Clyde Cameron, M.P. left wing member for Hindmarsh in South
Australia and a Vice President of the Executive Council resigned his position before the resolution was debated, his stated reason was his wife's ill health. Ironically the resolution was lost.\(^{(26)}\) However, the feud between Cameron and Dougherty that had been simmering for years became public and continued until Dougherty died.

Dougherty's attack was widely reported and he kept up the momentum in successive issues of the *Worker*.\(^{(27)}\) The New South Wales Labor Party Central Executive was incensed. Dougherty was accused by the President of the Labor Executive, J. Ferguson, of hypocrisy:

\[\ldots\text{as his umbrage and sudden interest in the Council's abolition could spring, of course, from the fact that on October 3 1945 he nominated for the Legislative Council unsuccessfully, and in March 1946 with the same result.}\(^{(28)}\)

This charge was countered by Dougherty who said that he had only nominated on one occasion in 1945 in order to vote for the abolition of the Council.\(^{(29)}\) It should also be remembered that Dougherty was from Queensland, where the upper house had been abolished by the Labor Party in 1922.\(^{(30)}\)

Dougherty had the N.S.W. Labor Executive backed into a corner. They had good reason to fear that the A.W.U. might break its ties with the N.S.W. Labor Party as the Tasmanian Executive had disaffiliated from the Party in July 1951 followed by the Victorian A.W.U. in February 1952.\(^{(31)}\) When the
N.S.W. Central(130,144),(536,597)

The Executive assures rank and file of Labor movement that if any serious break occurs in the A.W.U. relations with the A.L.P., it is because the N.S.W. Executive is not for sale to anybody. (32)

Their resolution of censure against Dougherty ignored the truth of his charge that Labor’s policy was being ignored. Instead the Executive defended their purity by stating that they could not be bought. Dougherty had been absent from the meeting that had censured him, but when the censure resolution was read in the next month’s Minutes Dougherty recorded his opposition. (33)

Dougherty and his allies, who had their own motives for seeking to oust the Ferguson machine, sent resolutions to be included in the Conference Agenda that the Party rules be adhered to and that politicians could not hold Executive office. The Legislative Councillors serving on the Executive had used a loophole, arguing that they were not politicians because they only worked part time and received a mere ten pounds a week. Dougherty called them an ‘...illegal dictatorship’. (34)

When the N.S.W. Labor Party Conference met in June 1952 the A.W.U., being the largest union, had the greatest number of delegates. (35) Charlie Oliver attended his first New South Wales Labor Party Conference as a delegate under the tutelage of his prince. Dougherty led the rebellion of rank and
file delegates against the ruling group. He moved that the Party rule which barred politicians from standing for the Executive be adhered to. It was carried by the Conference and swept out of power the eight ruling group politicians. Delegates cheered as the vote was counted.(36) The President of the old Executive, Jack Ferguson, recognising the writing on the wall, had secured a sinecure as Chairman of the Milk Board and had resigned before Conference.(37) The Sydney Morning Herald described Dougherty as '...the strong man behind the scenes...and the potential boss of the Party in New South Wales.'(38)

In the ballot for officers the new President of the Party was W.R. (Bill) Colbourne, a man who had been General Secretary of the Federal Labor Party in the thirties and had split from the Lang group.(39) The General Secretary was C.W. Anderson and the Assistant Secretary was J.T. (Jack) Kane. Dougherty was re-elected to the Central Executive and became a delegate to Federal Conference. There were eighty seven nominations for thirty two positions on the Central Executive and Oliver, at his first New South Wales Conference, gained the last position.(40) Oliver, thanks to his prince, was now part of the New South Wales machine and on his way to becoming one of the most powerful men in the Labor movement. His problems were just beginning.
Chapter 4. Early warning.

"Nothing is more worthy of a commander than foreseeing the plans of the enemy."(1)

In January 1959 Charlie Oliver was elected unopposed to the position of Vice President of the Executive Council for New South Wales.(2) The Branch finally regained its sovereignty on 11 June, 1953 when it held its first meeting. The President, A.W. McNamara, urged the Officers to avoid the mistakes of the past and to successfully manage the Branch.(3)

Business at the meeting included reference to the prospect of leasing land at Canberra in order to construct a building for the Union. Other discussion included the implementation of a new accounting system and rates to be paid to Executive members for attending meetings. The meeting also discussed certain aspects of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Act.(4)

The Snowy Mountains Scheme, part of the post war reconstruction programme of the Chifley Government was begun shortly prior to Labor losing office in 1949. The great project had been opened by Governor-General Sir William McKell, who as Premier of New South Wales, had set up an expert committee to
investigate diverting the Snowy River waters in 1941. McKell set the
first explosive charge at Eucumbene Dam on 17 October, 1949. The dam, the
first of sixteen, together with seven power stations, one pumping station,
extensive power supply network, 145 kilometres of transmountain tunnels and
1600 kilometres of road took 25 years to construct. It was the largest
development ever attempted in Australia. The project brought a multi-
national workforce of 100,000 people and their families to the Cooma
region.

It was also a watershed in A.W.U. membership as the Union had coverage for
labourers, survey hands, tunnel miners, quarry men, timekeepers and
storemen. The resulting increase in membership was especially welcome
as unemployment had begun to rise to four percent towards the end of
1952. That year the Executive Council had blamed the rise in
unemployment on floods of immigrants and had called for all immigration to
cease except for British migrants. Oliver had not been on the Executive
Council when that resolution was carried but he had criticised the Menzies
Government for conditions in the migrant camps which had caused Italian
migrants, at the Bonegilla camp in Victoria, to march on the administration
block to demand work. Later he supported the Executive Council
resolution and said there were 10,000 unemployed migrants in Sydney and that
conditions in the migrant centres were no better than red slave camps. Oliver,
despite his call for the cessation of migration because of the high
unemployment levels, benefited from the multi-national workforce in the
Snowy with increased membership bringing increased income and increased
del who to the State Labor Conference and the Labor Council.
Although he now headed a Union which covered hundreds of occupations
Charlie’s greatest affinity was with the miners. As Secretary of the Mining
Branch of the A.W.U. in Western Australia he had taken a year to prepare
and argue a successful case for a 37 1/2 hour week for underground miners
and a 40 hour week for surface miners, long before it became the
standard.(12) His mining background gave him the knowledge to understand
the magnitude of the project and he had the vision to think of the future.
He told the readers of the Worker, that an increased population was
necessary for Australia’s security. The power and irrigation that the
project would bring would be necessary to serve the Commonwealth
Statistician’s estimated population in 1962 of eleven million.(13)

As a boy Charlie had left church school before the legal age limit of
fourteen and had no further formal education. However, he was blessed with
a natural intelligence and was an avid reader, including the articles of
Henry Boote, long time editor of the Worker, who Charlie rated as being far
ahead in intellect of anyone in the A.W.U. As a youngster he said he
admired Boote’s articles and tried to emulate them in his industrial
arguments. When Charlie came to New South Wales as Union Secretary there
was no industrial staff and he did most of the industrial work before the
Court.(14)

In the spectrum of the trade union movement the A.W.U. was known for
settling disputes through the arbitration system rather than by militancy a
fact acknowledged by Dr. Evatt in addressing Convention in 1953 who said
'No Union had been more loyal to arbitration'. (15) Oliver himself had a healthy respect for arbitration probably because he prepared his cases well and gained judgements that benefited his members. When asked to name his greatest battle with employers Charlie answered that most employers were fairly reasonable and that the best example of good industrial relations had been the Snowy Mountains project where '...everything clicked, contractors were good, the Yanks were good, everything just fitted in.' (16)

This deceptive statement would suggest that it was Fortune again taking a hand to give Charlie another win. The reality was that Oliver, with the A.W.U. covering the major part of the work and with his knowledge of mining, was determined to get the members additional money for the hazardous working conditions on the project. One of Charlie's strengths, or weaknesses, depending on your viewpoint, was his ability to get on well with employers. Over the years Organisers who worked for him were riled when he settled disputes directly with the employers, despite the Organisers and the men wishing to fight on. (17)

Even before the main tenders were let Charlie had been visited by Jim Fogg, Manager of the Utah Company, who came to discuss what the Union would expect from his company. Charlie told him that the difficult underground tunnelling would need to be rewarded with more than wages. Utah's tender came in too high which Charlie believed was probably due to the fact that Fogg had built in a higher rate for the workers than the current Labourers, General (State) Award permitted. (18)
One of the major projects was let to Kaiser-Walsh-Perini-Raymond to build the Eucumbene to Tumut tunnel. As early as 1952 Justice Wright of the New South Wales Industrial Commission had been appointed as Special Arbitrator and Charlie accompanied him on six day inspection of the project. (19) Tunnelling had begun at Adaminaby by Allied Constructions and at Guthega under the Norwegian firm, Selmer, there had been a rock fall which killed a worker. The ensuing strike resulted in an inquiry insisting on greater safety measures and regular inspections. (20)

When the Joint Venturers started on the Eucumbene Portal, Junction Shaft, Tumut Ponds tunnel there were industrial problems and the men walked off the job. Oliver travelled to Cooma to talk with Kaisers’ management and together they went up to the Eucumbene site. On the site after talking with the delegates Charlie struck a deal with the head of Kaisers. They agreed if Charlie was successful at the Industrial Commission for increased tunnelling rates the company would then talk about bonus payments. (21) The stoppage escalated to other Kaiser sites and the President of the New South Wales Industrial Commission, Judge Stanley Taylor, after a compulsory conference and a site inspection, offered to make a decision on the rates if the men returned to work. (22)

Charlie’s deal with Kaisers could not be consummated without the consent of the Commission. In retrospect there seems to have been a degree of collusion between the company and the Union. David McLeish, retired Electrical Trades Union official, whose Union also had members on the
project, suggests that the rise and fall clause in the contract meant that the company was covered for increased costs. (23) If the new rates were approved by the Commission they would be paid for by the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority. The Authority was not part of the sweetheart deal and at the site inspection their Industrial Officer, Mr. W.D. Clark, told the workers that the Authority would be approaching the Federal Court for a Federal Award. This provocative action inflamed the situation as the Union and the workers saw this as an evasive action by the Authority to delay a decision. Consequently the men refused to return to work. (24)

Judge Stanley Taylor, President of the Industrial Commission of New South Wales since 1942, the most senior judge in that jurisdiction, later described the action by Mr. W.D. Clark as '...completely tactless... that nothing could be more calculated to prejudice a resumption than Mr. Clark's statement of his contemplated approach to a Federal authority at that juncture.' The Judge stated that his summons calling the parties together to show just cause why he should not prescribe rates had been issued on the understanding that the men would return to work. (25) His caustic comments in his Judgement make it clear that he blamed the Authority for the escalation of the dispute.

When the hearing commenced on 28 February 1955 Oliver appeared with Messrs. Kent and Bennett. There were also twelve other unions represented. Mr. Miller represented the joint venturers and the Authority had briefed Mr. John Kerr, GC and Mr. Vernon Watson to intervene on their behalf. Kerr threw down the gauntlet by asking, on behalf of the Authority, that the
hearing should not be proceeded with at that stage by the Industrial Commission.(26)

According to Charlie these tactics infuriated Judge Taylor who continued with the hearing. The Union had issued subpoenas to engineers from other sites on the project. Oliver treated them as hostile witnesses. He also called experts from the Department of Railways, Professor Munro, who had been head of the Water Board, an inspector from the Department of Labour and Industry and miners themselves. Oliver said the Judge gave him '...a very good run' whilst presenting the Union's case.(27) Despite his lack of formal legal training Oliver presented a professionally argued case based on the premise that the conditions were similar to those of the Adaminaby and Suthoega projects where payments were on an incentive basis. That tunnelling in such conditions needed expert, competent workers, to ensure the safety of the men working underground and that the base rate should be complemented by a rate on a piece work basis.(28)

From the beginning Oliver had understood the benefits the project could bring Australia. His philosophy that good industrial relations on such a project could only be achieved if the worker was rewarded not only for his labour but for his productivity and expertise is an acceptable part of today's industrial relations agenda. His powers of persuasion had already extracted an agreement from the joint venturers that if the Commission agreed to special rates they would then discuss a bonus system.

In John Kerr, Oliver recognised an enemy. He could see that in pressing for
a Federal determination Kerr was taking the matter not only out of Taylor's jurisdiction but also away from Oliver's arena. For a case to be heard before the Federal Arbitration Court would mean Dougherty would have carriage of the case. There was no guarantee that the Judge appointed in that jurisdiction would have the knowledge of Judge Taylor, who had conducted the inquiry after the Guthega fatality, and was well aware of the dangers of the project. Oliver's earlier success with the miners' working hours in Western Australia and his special affinity with the miners made him determined to win the case from Kerr, G.C.

According to Oliver it was obvious that everyone realised that the Judge was about to hand down a favourable decision for the Union. The case had opened on Monday 28 February 1955 and on Wednesday 2 March 1955 Oliver had a tip off from a source in Melbourne that the Federal Court was about to stop the matter the next morning. Oliver let it be known to the Judge that there were moves to take the case to the Federal Court. Judge Taylor's subsequent actions indicate that he had no intention of letting this happen. However, if he were ordered to stop the hearing he would have had to give way to the Federal jurisdiction. Oliver recounts how the Judge worked all night and handed down his decision at 9 a.m. on Thursday 3 March. When Federal Court Judge Sid Wright telephoned him at 10.30 a.m. to inform Taylor that he was prohibited from continuing with the case Oliver said he responded with the words '...too bloody late the judgement's out.'

The Judgement gave tunnel miners hourly rates on top of the base rate. Further it was backdated to 11th February. Taylor's recommendation
regarding a flaw on to the other craft unions was that they confer with the join venture to reach agreement within fourteen days. (32) Oliver believed it was Taylor's decision that enabled the great project to be successful and that if Kerr had taken the case to the Federal Court the industrial trouble that would have occurred might have meant the project would have been delayed, or not completed. (33) Oliver played to win and his negotiations behind the scenes are equally important as the case he presented to the Commission. Legal manouevring on Kerr's part was no match for the cunning of Oliver and the tenacity of Judge Taylor.

In a recent book on the Snowy scheme, Siobhan McHugh, devotes a chapter to the Union. The author quotes a former tunnel supervisor who believes two union delegates, Johnny Greene and Eddie Bowden played the leading role in gaining the extra rates. (34) Undoubtedly the evidence given by the men on the job was extremely important but it was the expert witnesses called by the Union and the professional case built up by Oliver and the Union's Counsel that persuaded Taylor, on the evidence, that the workers were entitled to the new rates.

Although the book presents an entertaining social picture of life on the Snowy, the author's assertions are not backed by evidence. Judge Taylor dealt only with evidence and in his Judgement he recommended that the Union deal directly with Commissioner Hudson and his co-commissioners. He suggested to Commissioner Hudson that he give great regard to the unions, 'particularly the Australian Workers' Union, a body which has
traditionally and without reservation supported the Arbitration system.'(35)

David McLeish certainly believes that Oliver was the driving force.(36)

Ms. McHugh, completely ignores the fact that Oliver had spent years in the
mines and was well aware of the dangers of tunnelling. He had spent all his
working life striving for better safety conditions and wages for Union
members. The author's lack of understanding of the breadth of the Union's
coverage shows in her first paragraph:

It was ironic that this product of the bush (A.W.U.) should
find itself the mouthpiece for a cosmopolitan workforce,
engaged in the most sophisticated construction every undertaken in
Australia'.(37)

If the author had checked the Union's Constitution she would have found that
far from being just a 'bush' Union, the A.W.U. covered over 250 Awards,
including construction and had been building major projects all over
Australia for most of the century. Her patronising assumption that Oliver
'...was probably no more ignorant of European cultures than other unionists
of the day'(38) shows a preconceived notion on her part and great ignorance
of Oliver's background. As a a miner in the tough Western Australian
goldfields, and then an Organiser, Oliver had worked with people from many
European and other cultures. When Ms. McHugh interviewed Oliver he was in
his late eighties and she shows little perception of the man he was at the
time of the Snowy construction or his dedication to the Union members. Her lack of perception is matched only by her lack of knowledge of the Union.

Ms. McHugh interviewed Sandra Valencic, who worked in the Union office at Cooma for five years from 1960, but chose not to include her view on how the members were treated by the Union. Mrs. Valencic worked with Organiser Bill Harvey, who is denigrated in Ms. McHugh’s book. Sandra’s opinion was that Harvey worked hard to obtain better conditions and wages for the members, who earned more than he did. The members were she said ‘Well housed, well fed and well paid’. They also had ready access to the Union’s solicitors, J.J. Carroll & O’Dea, who used to send a representative up to Cooma at least once a fortnight if members sought help for workers’ compensation.(39) The one sided view that Ms. McHugh puts in her book shows clearly that she does not understand the role of the Union or Australia’s industrial system.

History had taught the A.W.U. that outright confrontation was not necessarily the path to victory and Oliver used the arbitration system to legitimize the deal he had already made with the Joint Venturers. However, there was no guarantee that the Commission would find in the Union’s favour. It took Oliver, his Counsel and expert witnesses to present evidence to back
the claim. Nevertheless, the outcome might not have been beneficial to the members, if the matter had gone to the Federal Court. The early warning had given Judge Taylor the time he needed to bring down the Award, thus thwarting the intentions of Kerr and the Snowy Mountains Authority to take the matter to the Federal Court.
Chapter 5. Pious citizens.

'The deeds of the citizens should be scrutinised carefully, for the beginning of tyranny is often concealed beneath a pious act.'(1)

When Dougherty gained control of the New South Wales Labor Executive at the 1952 June State Conference the Sydney Morning Herald had described him as the boss of New South Wales Labor.(2) Dougherty's 'righteous' mission had been to rid the Party of a ruling clique who, he said, were only interested in feathering their own nests. The Ferguson ruling group were no different from any other oligarchy but Dougherty was determined to crush the politicians on the Executive in order to achieve his ultimate aim to abolish the Legislative Council. This obsession seems to have blinkered him to the dangers of forging an alliance with those whose 'pious' motives were different from his own. Oliver, a comparative newcomer to New South Wales politics, did not perceive the dangers until much later.

Obstensibly it was Dougherty's victory but it had been achieved at a price. The price he paid was that the new Labor Party Executive was controlled by the 'groupers'. The industrial groups, formed in 1945 to combat communism in unions with the support of the Labor Party,(3) did not appear to be any threat to the A.W.U. as the Union was traditionally anti-communist and

34
gave support to the groups in Queensland and Victoria. On the surface the alliance was a marriage made in heaven.

The groupers had used Dougherty and Oliver to gain power for their own purposes and had no intention of being used to further Dougherty's obsession. They had beaten him at his own game. Dougherty later contended that the groupers were controlled by members of Catholic Action, known as the Movement. This secret organisation, he alleged, operated within the Catholic Church and was masterminded by B.A. Santamaria, whose main aim was to gain control of the Labor Party in order to direct its policies. Certainly when the groupers gained control of the New South Wales Labor Executive they had the opportunity to use the Party to give them legitimacy and authority. The new Executive included W.R. (Bill) Colbourne as President, Vice Presidents J. Shortell and H.J. Blackburn. Oliver had gained the last position on the thirty-two member Executive. The officers' positions were still held by C.W. Anderson, as Organising Secretary and E.G. Wright, General Secretary; both were Members of the Legislative Council. However, Anderson was a Catholic and close to the industrial groups, whereas Wright had been a Ferguson supporter.

The marriage was successful in its first year. By December 1932 Dougherty had moved to dismiss Wright with one month's pay in lieu of notice for alleged wrongful use of Party funds. Anderson moved into the position of General Secretary and J.T. (Jack) Kane, who had been elected to the Executive at the same time as Oliver, became Organising Secretary. As well as being an Executive member Kane was the Secretary of the Industrial
Groups. At the 1953 State Conference Dougherty and Oliver were re-elected to the State Executive. Oliver remembers that the A.W.U. delegation supported the Groups’ Charter which gave them official standing within the Party, a decision that was to be regretted by Oliver within a few short months.

Oliver, the former politician, took his duties on the State Executive very seriously and seldom missed a meeting. Dougherty attended less frequently, possibly because he travelled interstate on Union business, or perhaps once the prize was won it held less interest for him. He was not in attendance at the meeting which took place on 18 September 1953. Charlie was at that meeting and remembers Kane and his supporters moving amendments to the Groups’ rules. The seemingly innocent amendments aroused Charlie’s sense of danger. Oliver asked Colbourne:

Do these rules mean that the Groups will have the sole rights to select trade union candidates for trade union positions? Does it mean that I, as a non-Grouper, with no intention of becoming one, will be expelled from the A.L.P. if I oppose the candidate selected by the Groups?

Colbourne replied that all members had to obey the rules or suffer the consequences. Oliver voted against the amendments his only supporter being the Secretary of the Bus Employees’ Union.

Just fifteen months had passed since the alliance of the groupers and the
A.W.U. and the marriage had turned sour. Oliver said this was the end of the groups for him and he wasted no time in warning Dougherty. Dougherty advised Oliver to stay on the Executive and he would see what could be done. (19) Outwardly there was no apparent rift and Oliver and Dougherty continued to attend Executive meetings. In reality from then on Oliver and Dougherty worked towards the elimination of the groupers from the Labor Party in New South Wales. Charlie’s view, many years after, was that if there was a conspiracy there had to be a counter conspiracy. (20)

In order to gain A.W.U. rank and file support Oliver arranged two special rallies at Bathurst and Orange in November 1953. Both were well attended and the Bathurst meeting carried a resolution to be sent for debate at the 1954 Convention:

That this meeting of A.W.U. members has confidence in the Constitution and general rules of the Union and the manner in which they are being administered. It is definitely opposed to the formation of groups of members, including industrial groups, within the Union for any purpose and would view the formation of such groups as a breach of our rules. (21)

As the home of Ben Chifley, Bathurst was a symbolic choice for Oliver. Any threat to the Labor Party was a threat to the Chifley legend.

Convention was held in Brisbane beginning on 25 January 1954. The Bathurst
resolution was moved by J. King, Vice President of the New South Wales Branch. Oliver seconding the resolution said:

"...various groups have been set up to defeat the machinations of the Communist Party in the Trade Unions...those groups have been very successful and have done a grand job in cleaning out this cancer in the life of Australian Trade Unionism....This Union has never experienced the necessity of a group inside the Union. It has always been able, because of its rules, to handle any situation with which it has been confronted...All that is required is to carry this motion and it will make it clear to everyone that this Union at least does not want interference from groups of any kind."(22)

Charlie went on to warn the delegates of proposed amendments to the Groups' rules which would mean that anyone standing in a union election would need the support of an inner group or risk expulsion from the Labor Party in New South Wales. The delegates carried the resolution.(23)

Dr. Evatt also addressed Convention and pledged, if elected, his government would restore quarterly cost of living adjustments and work for the welfare of the Australian people. His speech was received by acclamation and Convention resolved to wholeheartedly support Evatt's campaign.(24) There would have been ample opportunity for Dougherty and Oliver to have expressed their fears to Evatt about the situation in New South Wales. Even if Evatt had not been present when Oliver's resolution was debated, it was reported by the Sydney Morning Herald on 28 January 1954. Evatt, with a Federal
election due, did not publicly comment. After all he had been supported by the groups in the leadership ballot against Arthur Calwell, supported by the left. (25) Evatt was also aware of the involvement of B.A. Santamaria's Catholic Action in the groups. According to Santamaria, Evatt had sought him out on three occasions to discuss the political situation and seek his assistance prior to the 1954 election. (26)

In April 1954 the A.L.P. Industrial Groups held a conference, the A.W.U. was noticeable by its absence. (27) Despite this journalist Alan Reid believed that Dougherty was still supporting the Labor State Executive. Reid wrote an article in the Sun attacking Dougherty. Reid wrote that the Union's rules had been changed to bar politicians from holding A.W.U. office. He indicated that Clyde Cameron, South Australian M.H.R., had been a victim of the rule change. Dougherty was described as being "...identified with the present bitterly anti-Communist executive in New South Wales." The article suggested there was a homeric battle raging between the President of the N.S.W. Labor Party Bill Colbourne who wanted the job of Labor Party Federal Secretary Pat Kennelly and that Dougherty was backing Colbourne. Reid also alleged that H.O. Davis, Victorian A.W.U. Branch Secretary and President of the Fédéral Union, wanted Dougherty's job. (28) Dougherty lashed back in the Worker denouncing Reid as a 'Tory Hireling' pointing out that the rule change resolution had been lost and that Cameron had resigned of his own accord. In repudiating Reid Dougherty said he did not belong to any faction nor "...any group which may or may not, exist within the A.L.P." and that he and Davis were the best of friends. (29)
Oliver had wanted to leave the Executive in September 1953, when the proposed amendments to the Group Charter had been moved, but Dougherty had persuaded him to stay. As State Secretary of a right wing union, and a member of the Central Executive, Oliver's natural inclination was to support the right. However, his celtic background, and years as a miner, had made him a man of fierce independence. He was also an Anglican and a Mason. It was totally alien to his nature to be in a position where others controlled his destiny. An honourable alliance with Dougherty was one thing, but subservience to forces outside the Union and the Labor Party was quite another. Oliver saw no distinction between the Labor Party and the Union they were '...all the one thing'.(30)

Oliver and Dougherty were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If they repudiated the groups it would be assumed that they had deserted Evatt and had switched allegiance to Calwell. If they stayed with Colbourne and Kane they would have to safeguard themselves from the possibility of a group, within the union, attempting to gain control. Dougherty and Oliver's strategy was to avoid a full break with the Labor Party, unlike A.G. Platt of the Transport Workers' Union who broke with the Party, just prior to Conference, because of interference by the groups in his election.(31) Dougherty and Oliver were not facing an election until 1955 and hoped they had time to tame the tiger. Neither attended the Central Executive meeting prior to State Conference.(32) Their aim was to distance themselves from the Executive by not renominating for Executive positions. Oliver and
Dougherty told no one of their decision so that the Groupers were caught off guard and had no chance to persuade other A.W.U. delegates to nominate. (33)

The N.S.W. Labor Conference was held on the weekend of 12, 13 and 14 June 1954. Jack Kane, gave his report on Sunday when he attempted to justify the groups activities and attacked Platt. (34) Oliver seconded a motion from F. Campbell of the E.T.U., that the Executive discuss with the T.W.U. the possibility of re-affiliation and that any group within that union have its charter withdrawn. Oliver went to the microphone and began by saying to the President, Bill Colbourne, 'When dealing with this amendment I want to discuss the Group Rules.' Colbourne swiftly moved to gag him and said 'You can't discuss those rules. They have nothing to do with us. You can't do that here.' (35) Charlie was not amused and by the next morning he and Dougherty had forced the Executive to compromise with a resolution that the Executive call a conference with A.L.P. unions to discuss the Groups' Charter, in relation to the Party rules. It also stated that it had never been the intention of groups to intervene in A.L.P. controlled unions, unless invited by the officials of that union. (36) Oliver and Dougherty had checkmated Kane.

The A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive had met the day before Conference began. Oliver had kept them in the dark about his intentions. When they resumed their meeting on 15th June 1954 he outlined his strategy and the Branch Executive obligingly carried two resolutions, albeit after the event.
The first confirmed the Bathurst resolution concerning the Groups, which had been carried by Convention, they also instructed the President and Secretary to:

take every possible action when attending the Conference of A.L.P. Unions, to be convened by the A.L.P. State Executive to prevent Industrial Groups intruding into Unions not under Communist Control.(37)

The second resolution instructed all Officers of the Union not to accept positions on the State Executive until the next Labor Conference.(38) It was to be much longer before Oliver returned to the N.S.W. Labor Executive.

From June to October Oliver and Dougherty played a waiting game. They still supported Evatt who was preoccupied by other events. Labor had lost the May Federal election, after Menzies had announced the defection of Soviet diplomat, Vladimir Petrov.(39) The resulting Royal Commission into Espionage became a witchhunt with Evatt defending members of his staff who had been accused of communist sympathies.(40) Evatt was conscious that he could no longer rely on the support of the industrial groups to back him in any leadership contest and that the groupers saw the Royal Commission as justifying their anti communist beliefs.(41)

Oliver and Dougherty were present at the Labor Day Dinner at Trades Hall on
2 October 1954 when Evatt told the unionists that they must insist on loyalty to the Labor Party.\(^{(42)}\) Evatt released a statement on 6 October which began:

The strong and determined desire of the overwhelming majority of trade-union officials and membership for solidarity within the movement has been given eloquent expression at the Labor Day celebrations in New South Wales.\(^{(43)}\)

Evatt accused a minority of Labor Party parliamentarians and members, especially in Victoria, of attempting to undermine him and other endorsed candidates. Evatt alleged the group was being directed from outside the Labor movement.\(^{(44)}\) He did not name Santamaria or Catholic Action.

The forces that this statement unleashed were to split the Labor Party and change the relationship between Oliver and Dougherty. Dougherty, always a volatile figure, took the high ground and attacked the groups. The \textit{Worker}'s headline 'Santamaria Unmasked - Mastermind behind industrial groups' painted a lurid picture of fifth columnists out to destroy the Chifley and Curtin legends and to take over the Labor Party.\(^{(45)}\) The following issue challenged Santamaria to sue if he could prove that the charges were false.\(^{(46)}\)

Although Dougherty fired the gun it was Oliver who gave him the bullets. It had been Oliver who was the first to recognise the dangers, inherent in the Groupers proposed amendments to Labor Party rules, who had warned Dougherty
of their hidden agenda. The documents printed in the *Worker* had been given to Oliver by a prominent Catholic who did not like what the groups were doing within his Church. He had asked Oliver to treat the documents confidentially but as Oliver said:

That is always a difficult thing to say to an A.W.U. man. Anything that does not concern the A.W.U. it is not my business. It is very difficult to say I am going to treat everything in confidence when I find it concerns this organisation. When I studied the documents that night I found that they were very important to the welfare of this organisation. I decided to consult the General Secretary and told him all that was contained in them. (47)

Now that war had been declared Oliver and Dougherty gathered support from other disenchanted unions. When Anderson, State Secretary of the Labor Party, and well known industrial group supporter, resigned the rebels held a preliminary meeting on 9 November 1954. They sent a telegram of protest to the Federal Executive regarding H.J. Blackburn replacing Anderson on that body. (48) Dougherty later alleged that Anderson had been forced to resign after a radio interview where he said there was no need for industrial groups in A.L.P controlled unions. (49) The defection of Anderson left a vacancy which was immediately filled by Colbourne who resigned as President. (50) Blackburn had then taken the Presidency.

The meeting also carried a resolution condemning the State Executive for being influenced by an outside organisation and called another meeting of
interested unionists for November 16th. The resolution was signed by Dougherty, Oliver, F. Campbell, E.T.U., R.H. Erskine, Textile Workers’ Union, A.G. Platt, Transport Workers’ Union and R.J. Williams, Builders’ Labourers Union. (51)

A second meeting on 16 November 1954, attended by thirty one unionists from twenty one unions, was again held at Trades Hall, just two doors away from Labor’s headquarters. The choice of the venue was deliberate so that it could not be said that the rebels were embarking on a secret conspiracy. (52) The meeting was chaired by Bob Erskine, Federal President and State Secretary of the Textile Workers’ Union. (53) The purpose of the meeting was to decide what action could be taken to remove members of an outside organisation from controlling the Labor Party. F. Campbell, E.T.U. Secretary, accused the Assistant General Secretary, Jack Kane, and Organiser Rooney, of being full time paid employees of the Movement before being elected as officials of the Party. Oliver in supporting Campbell’s resolution said that the Union had at first supported the groups’ work to destroy communist influence until it became obvious that Catholic Action was infiltrating the groups. He supported the move to dismiss Kane and Rooney. (54)

Dougherty moved a resolution that a delegation of three attend the Federal Executive meeting to be held on 29th November in Melbourne:
for the purpose of informing that body of the dominating influence exercised by an outside organisation over the affairs of the New South Wales Branch A.L.P. (55)
The delegation was to be Dougherty, Campbell and A.B. Platt of the T.W.U. and they were to report back.\(^{(56)}\) The meeting was later described by Oliver as 'setting the whole show alight'.\(^{(37)}\) Oliver, of course, was only referring to New South Wales as the fire had already been lit in Victoria by H.O. Davies of the A.W.U. and other rebel unions.\(^{(58)}\)

Dougherty, as General Secretary, commanding all the Branches of the Union, was a formidable figure. However, the Federal Executive was not impressed and did not grant him an interview. Finally Platt and Campbell, appeared before the Federal Executive in the early hours of 4 December 1954. \(^{(59)}\) The Federal Executive, which included Colbourne and Blackburn, resolved that the rebels letter be referred to the N.S.W. State Executive and listed for consideration at the Federal Executive's next meeting.\(^{(60)}\)

On 14 December 1954 the rebel unions again met at Trades Hall. The delegation reported that the Federal Executive would hold an inquiry into the N.S.W. A.L.P. Executive and had dismissed the Victorian Labor Executive and disbanded the Victorian industrial groups.\(^{(61)}\) It was a turning point in the war. Oliver was elected to work on the Organising Committee comprising Dougherty, R.H. Erskine, Textile Workers, A.B. Platt, Transport Workers, R.J. Williams, Builders Laborers, F. Campbell and J.D. Keenahan, Electrical Trades Union and J. Ormonde of the Labor Party. The Committee was to collect evidence to present to the inquiry.\(^{(62)}\) While Dougherty grabbed the headlines Oliver was his lieutenant with the task of making the bullets.
Meanwhile the N.S.W. Labor Executive, in an attempt to discipline Dougherty, over the *Worker* articles, summoned him to appear before them. (63) Dougherty refused to attend. He answered through the *Worker* that the Labor Executive was acting 'as though it were a revolutionary tribunal.' The article went on to warn that where there were power tyrants could develop but all would be well. (64) The *Worker*, as it had been many times in its long history, was the ideal propaganda tool.

Oliver's final report, in the *Worker*, for 1954 advised that a meeting of pastoral workers had enthusiastically adopted a proposal to increase membership fees which would be used to fight the graziers who were trying to lower the shearing rate, a problem that was to erupt in 1956. The same meeting resolved to support Dr. Evatt in his fight against disruptive elements in the Party. (65)

The fight continued into the new year. Evatt and Dougherty were invited by Oliver to address the Branch Executive which met in January 1955, to discuss a joint application, by the Labor Party and the Union, for a television licence. Although this was an astute commercial move it was to counter an application made by the Labor Council's radio station 2KY, in consortium with Frank Packer's Consolidated Press and other private enterprise partners. It was also a veiled attack on grouper supporters Jim Kenny, Assistant Secretary of Labor Council and Jim Shortell, Labor Council President. (66)
Annual Convention began on 24 January, 1955. Queensland Branch President, J. Bukowski, previously a group supporter, had denounced the Movement earlier in the month. (67) Together he and Oliver moved that only delegates speak at Convention. (68) The main speakers on the issue of turmoil within the Labor Party were Dougherty, Bukowski, Davis and Oliver. Oliver’s speech, on the fifth day was a careful denunciation of the Groups. Although too long to quote in its entirety, its rational tones can be judged from this extract:

Mr. President, I propose to deal with what I would like to term “The March to Power of the Industrial Groups,” and I want you to remember this, Mr. President and delegates, that is a complete transition from the Groups as we knew them. During the year 1952-53 the A.L.P. Industrial Groups have concentrated their activities in three specific spheres: Trade Union Elections, Propaganda, Political Campaigns. You must appreciate from those three points that the Groups have gone a long way. They have gone from what we interpreted the Groups to be, they have gone Political. The Liaison Committee was set up through the co-operation of three State Branches of the A.L.P. they were no longer to operate in the trade union movement, but they were to operate in politics at a Federal level. Never forget that the Groups were on the march, and that it all happened in one year. Very many of these people are simply after power. They can’t put forward an argument for power nakedly and unashamedly, therefore they find a point of dispute and they build that up until they convince themselves of it. Can anyone honestly deny that Industrial Groups and the Movement will
not only destroy the Trade Union Movement, but will eventually destroy the A.L.P. as we know and understand it...You have an affliction on the body of Labor. If this Convention does the right thing, it can be the first to remove that affliction. If it does the wrong thing, the affliction will eventually destroy the whole of this Union, the Labor Party, and all the benefits it has given the Australian people....Delegates my last words to you. Do everything in your power, do everything that is humanly possible to destroy this monstrous Movement.(69)

Convention unanimously moved to continue the struggle to rid the Labor Party of the Movement and the Industrial Groups.(70)

Oliver also attacked the Groups for controlling Premier Joe Cahill. He accused Cahill of caving in to the Labor Executive over legislation to introduce compulsory unionism. Oliver argued that the Groups pushed for the legislation in order to increase membership and finance and gain control of the State Labor Conference.(71) This attack on Cahill may have been for other motives. During 1954 the Union Executive had condemned the Cahill government for inaction in not passing on marginal adjustments to workers.(72) Cahill was also still supporting the State Labor Executive.(73)

The events that followed at the Special Federal Conference in Hobart held in 14th March 1955 saw the Conference ratify the dismissal of the Victorian Labor Executive and the withdrawal of recognition of industrial groups.
With regard to the New South Wales Labor Executive it was left to the Federal Executive to investigate and, if necessary, call another Special Federal Conference. (74)

Consequently a few days later Oliver and his Executive resolved to pay the Union's affiliation fees direct to the Federal Executive. (75) Their move was followed by the other rebel unions and twenty eight Branch Secretaries, who met on 4 April, and also resolved to withhold their affiliation fees from the State Executive. The rebel committee called on the Federal Executive to call a special conference. (76) In this atmosphere the Federal Executive cancelled the normal June State Conference to be replaced by a Special Conference, under the auspices of the Federal Executive for 13-14 August 1955. (77)

During this period Oliver sought the support of Labor Council affiliates in his battle to force Cahill to pass on the marginal adjustments to workers. Dougherty also attacked Cahill in the Worker for his tardiness. (78) The Worker was also used to attack those whom Dougherty labelled groupers.

Fred Daly, M.H.R., a member of the Union, was pilloried by Dougherty in the Worker. Probably at his instigation the N.S.W. Branch Executive gave Daly twenty one days to show cause why he should not be expelled from the A.W.U. (79) Daly denied being a member of the Movement or the Industrial Groups and describes the times as tragic when guilt by association ruled. (80) In retrospective Daly regrets not having sued Dougherty for his
allegations. Although it was Oliver's Executive that threatened to expel Daly he had great respect for Charlie Oliver. When asked his opinion of Dougherty and Oliver Fred Daly summed up the two men:

Dougherty was a bombastic, powerful leader, a great hater and head kicker, pro-Evatt. Oliver was a placid, tolerant, understanding, soothing influence at that time. He promoted harmony and was well respected.(81)

Daly remembers joining the A.W.U. at the suggestion of Vic Johnson, the Member for Kalgoorlie, who had been a Minister in the Chifley Government. Johnson had said that Daly would benefit from having a large Union to back him. As events turned out there was no benefit for Daly in his membership of the Union as Dougherty continued his vendetta against him by trying to undermine Daly's pre-selection. When the Union attempted to expel him Daly resigned from the Union.(82)

F.E. Chamberlain, Federal President, chaired the N.S.W. Labor Conference in August.(83) Oliver's A.W.U. delegation was the largest with forty seven delegates.(84) Although the rebels won the Presidency for F.H. Campbell, Oliver did not have the numbers to capture a vice presidency. He was, however, successful as a Federal Conference delegate together with J.A. Mulvihill and A.G. Platt. Blackburn and Colbourne were the only group supporters on the delegation.(85) For Oliver this was the beginning of the
road back to power and a turning point in his relationship with Dougherty, who had decided not to nominate for any position. Dougherty's publicly stated reason was:

I am in this fight with the members of the A.W.U., to purge the Labor Party of the outside influence which is disrupting it. I will stay in the fight until it is won. (86)

It may also have been that he was not sure that he could attract the numbers and he was not a man who liked to lose face. In fact he did not have the numbers for when he attempted to charge Kane and Rooney at the Conference his resolution failed by seventeen votes. The headlines in the Worker proclaimed 'Movement' Seizes A.L.P. Executive. (87) A rather dramatic headline which should more accurately have been "Movement Retains Control of A.L.P. Executive".

Oliver had another success when Premier Cahill assured Conference that he would amend the Arbitration Act to guarantee adjustments to the basic wage. (88) From that moment on the attacks on Cahill ceased and later the Worker defended him against allegations of bribery. (89) Cahill's change of heart was the beginning of a fruitful relationship. At Convention in 1956 he was a guest speaker together with Evatt and Calwell. (90) Oliver paid a tribute to him:
I have no need to tell you, Mr. President, how much of a privilege I feel at this opportunity of having Mr. Cahill here today... Mr. Cahill is a true man of the people - a man who came out of the workshops, with a very proper appreciation of working-class problems....the whole of his life has been devoted to improving the lot of all people, particularly the working-class people....we are grateful and do appreciate the humane legislation that you have recently enacted. We want to thank you for the 40-hour week legislation, because we know you played a big part in it...if we did not have a Labor Government in New South Wales, the stranglehold on the basic wage would never have been released....Mr. Cahill himself has displayed qualities of leadership; he has held his Party together, and those are the things that are necessary to statesmanship. (91)

A far cry from the previous year when Oliver had called Cahill a Menzies clone. (92)

Fortune had again sailed on Charlie in the Union elections. He was unopposed as State Secretary and as a Vice President of the Federal Union, as were other officials. (93) Allegations were made that Executive Council had changed the rule which called for nominations to be advertised in the Worker. (94) The Labor Party was not fortunate electorally, the Labor vote dropping in New South Wales, at the 10 December 1955 election, with the loss
of four seats. (93) At the 3 March 1956 State election Cahill won but with a reduced majority. (96) It could no longer be ignored that Labor's internal fighting was costing it votes.

In April the Federal Executive met to discuss the New South Wales situation. (97) Oliver and Dougherty had made allegations at Convention that the State Executive had refused to continue counting the ballot for Senate pre-selection and eventually it became too late and the State Executive had chosen the candidates. Oliver said the Labor Party in New South Wales '...had been in the gutter on previous occasions, but it was in the sewer to-day.' (98) The Federal Executive again met in Melbourne in June followed by a Special Conference. As a delegate to the Federal Conference Oliver had the joy of voting for the Federal Executive recommendation that the New South Wales Executive be dismissed for acting contrary to the Federal Constitution and policy as interpreted by the Executive. Until a suitable organisation was established the Federal Executive would run New South Wales. (99)

It was at the Melbourne conference that Oliver forged an alliance with a new partner, Bill Colbourne. The pact was that, if Colbourne helped Oliver to sort out New South Wales, Oliver would give him total support. (100) This alliance was later to complicate the relationship between Oliver and Dougherty.

The Federal Executive picked a new State Executive for New South Wales Labor which included Charlie Oliver. Again he was at the centre of power and his
good fortune continued when he won the position of Vice President. (101)
Pro-Evatt supporters had a clear majority with the balance comprising
Grouper supporters, including Colbourne and Shortall, in an effort to avoid
a split. (102)

However, there were those who preferred to go and in October 1956 former
members created the Democratic Labor Party. In a circular to Branches
Colbourne said:

The new Party does not give the A.L.P. the slightest cause for
concern for as with other splinter groups which have broken off
from the A.L.P. in the past, it will surely pass into oblivion
discredited and despised. (103)

An unfortunate judgement, which became evident as members left the Labor
Party to join the Democratic Labor Party leaving a wake of bitterness
behind them.

Oliver, as Vice-President of New South Wales Labor devoted himself to the
task of rebuilding a traumatised Party. The then Labor Party Assistant
Secretary, J.A. (Tony) Mulvihill, spent many hours with Oliver visiting
country and city branches and remembers Oliver's courage and patience in
spending hours talking to branch members, on both sides, to build bridges
for reconciliation. Mulvihill says it was Oliver who kept the Officers
neutral by his philosophy not to take sides. (104)
By then Dougherty, through his own choice, was on the outside of the Party and later becomes instrumental in causing even more instability when he returns to his original obsession to abolish the Legislative Council. As Oliver becomes part of the entrenched establishment of the Party and his power increases, his relationship with Dougherty alters. He is no longer dependent on Dougherty for patronage; he has his own power base and is his own man.
Chapter 6. Traditional enemies.

'Whether it is better, under threat of attack, to attack or to wait for the outbreak of war.'(1)

The high level of wool prices in the early 1950's had stimulated a strong rise in world wool production so that by 1952 wool production had increased by forty percent. Consequently the Australian export wool price began to fall.(2)

Whilst Oliver and Dougherty were preoccupied with their battle, in the Labor Party, the Union's traditional enemy was on the attack. In December 1955 the Queensland Graziers' Association had been successful in reducing the pastoral rates under the State Pastoral Award. Consequently a dispute was raging in Queensland.(3) As well that year the Graziers' Association had applied to reduce the Federal Pastoral Award and in retaliation the Union applied to the Court to increase the rates. The hearing, in the Federal Arbitration Court, continued into 1956. The Graziers' Association application also asked that the Federal Pastoral Award include all employees in the industry whether members of the union or not.(4)

Oliver was concerned at the prospect of lower rates and held country rallies at Bathurst and Orange on 6 November 1955. These rallies provided a forum
for rank and file members to put their views by sending resolutions to Annual Convention. At Orange the members carried a resolution:

That this meeting fully supports the Union’s fight to preserve the living standards of pastoral workers, and recommends an instant stoppage should the Graziers’ application for reduced rates succeed.

Further, we believe that in the face of rising costs of living, tools, travelling, etc., the Union’s log of claims is justified, and we call on all members to unite and give active support to any course of action the Union may take to win these just claims.(5)

The reality was that living standards had peaked in 1950 to 1951 but fell considerably in 1952 and although they began to recover in 1953 to 1956, it was not until 1964 that they regained the 1951 levels.(6) Later in November, 1955 Oliver addressed members at meetings in Hay, Leeton and Yanco, where he urged them not to accept reduced rates. The members supported any action the Union might take concerning the pastoral rates.(7)

The graziers’ submission had emphasised the fact that the rates had been set, in 1952, when wool prices were high and had not been reviewed for some years.(8) On 16 February 1956, Commissioner Donovan announced his interim decision to reduce rates, under the Federal Pastoral Award, by 5% as from 5 March 1956,(9) a decision which surprised and angered Dougherty and Oliver as the Union case had not been fully heard. Whereas the attack in

58
Queensland had been limited to the State Pastoral Award, under which mainly non-unionists were paid, the Executive Council could not ignore a reduction of the rates under the Federal Pastoral Award, the relevant award for A.W.U. members. Their decision was to counter-attack by declaring war on Donovan’s decision. Members were instructed not to offer for employment after 3rd March unless they were paid the 1955 rates or better.(10) If it was to be a battle between capital and labour, the shearsers would withdraw their labour.

In February Oliver had refused a request, from the Labor Party, for country Organisers to assist in the State election campaign. In his letter to Kane, then Assistant Secretary of the Labor Party, Oliver said the dispute in the pastoral industry was demanding attention from his officials. As well major flooding had made conditions difficult for travel.(11) Although Oliver and Dougherty were at loggerheads with the State Labor Executive, they had pledged to help return the Cahill government.(12) Oliver’s refusal shows how serious the pastoral dispute was becoming.

Oliver visited country areas explaining the situation to the shearsers. It was a gruelling schedule. At Goulburn, on 26 February, he spoke to sixty seven members from Crookwell, Taralga, Collector and Bungendore:

The reason pastoral workers in the whole of Australia are refusing to accept employment in the Pastoral Industry is because, while all other workers in Australia have been and are being granted wage increases, pastoral workers have had their wages reduced. Members of Parliament, Judges, Conciliation Commissioners, Civil Servants, in
fact, every type of salary earner have enjoyed wage increases. (13)

Oliver continued on to Coonamble, Narrabri, Moree, Inverell and then Bourke on 3 March 1956. At all the meetings local committees decided to take voluntary levies. (14) Union Organisers visited the smaller rural towns spreading the word. (15) Shearers were asked to shear under the 1955 rates and only to work where a written agreement was signed which stated the old rates. They were told that the Transport Workers' Union and the Waterside Workers' Union had pledged support to stop the transportation and shipment of wool declared black by the A.W.U. (16)

Union history was made when Oliver called a meeting of all pastoral delegates in Sydney on 31 March 1956. (17) Four delegates were elected to represent New South Wales at an Executive Council meeting to which delegates were invited from all over Australia. (18) The special Executive meeting met on 4 April 1956 and all delegates endorsed their solidarity for the Executive Council decisions. (19) Later that month the New South Wales Branch Executive approved the setting up of local committees in all districts where '...it is deemed necessary'. (20) In reality forty three local committees were already functioning. The Branch Executive endorsed the concept of a one pound levy for piece workers and ten shillings for wage earners to be paid to the Branch account to be kept in trust for local requirements. Levy tickets were to be printed. The local committees would be supported as long as they conformed to the Union's rules. (21) Local committees that had been inactive for some time, such as the Crookwell committee, became '...very alive and enthusiastic', forming a new committee.
to keep members informed of Union policy and '...for generally policing union affairs.'(22)

Pastoralists, anxious to get their wool clip cheque, paid the 1955 rates. A Northern grazer, W.J. Rundle, advised fellow pastoralists to pay the 1955 rate and accused the Graziers' Association of obstinacy which could lead to heavy losses.(23) The Worker published a report that the Queensland Graziers President, W.A. Gunn, had paid the 1955 rates for his shearing. (24) Malcolm Fraser, the Liberal member for Wannon in Victoria, was reported as saying that a strike would ruin the wool clip for two years. Fraser said this would occur because buyers did not like the long wool staple, which resulted from late shearing in one year, nor the short staple produced in the second year. The Member for Wannon put his view:

I believe this strike is stupid for both sides, for its origins lie not so much in a fight between the A.W.U. and the graziers, though that is what it has degenerated into, as a fight of the A.W.U. with a rusty and inefficient arbitration system....A bad decision has led to a strike that I believe to be not justified but understandable....The strike must be settled for Australia's sake...There is a way out....It is: An independent chairman and discussion between representatives of both sides to reach a decision to be binding until the revised arbitration machinery can review the whole case. It would be a good thing if the graziers could initiate a move for such a conference.(25)
Malcolm Fraser, of course, was speaking both as a politician and a grazier. Australian wool exports were important to him politically and financially. The Worker whilst complimenting Fraser for his candour suggested a speedier way out would be if Fraser moved an amendment to legislation giving politicians the twelve pounds marginal increase by adding the words '...and pastoral workers.' (26)

Oliver's opinion of Malcolm Fraser is not known but his general opinion of graziers was expressed in a letter to a member:

The graziers as a section of the community are very fine people and it is evident that at least 98% of them are not critical of the pastoral workers' struggle to maintain their wage rates and working conditions. In fact it is very doubtful whether Mr. De Vos, as spokesman of the Graziers' Association, actually represents any large body of employers in the pastoral industry. He certainly represents some great financial institutions who have interests in the pastoral industry such as the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Company, whose headquarters are at 20-22 Coleman Street, London, and whose directorate includes Lord Luke of Parenhan. (It is quite possible that Lord Luke would have some idea of what a sheep looks like), and the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, whose headquarters are 69A George Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. It should be very clear that the Companies mentioned have little sympathy or interest in the average Australian pastoralists' problems. (27)
Oliver's cynicism that the Graziers' Association was controlled by the vested interests of British capitalists, with an aristocrat director, could have come direct from the Worker under the editorial direction of H.E. Boote. Oliver urged the members to buy their levy tickets and branded the Graziers' Association a 'reactionary organisation'. He published in the Worker a copy of a letter the Association had sent out to its members calling for voluntary subscriptions for a strike fund to support the cost of transporting labour by air, rail and road to sheds, as well as paying for legal and publicity costs. (28)

By 23 May 1956, Oliver was able to report considerable progress with one hundred and sixty seven sheds in New South Wales paying the 1955 rates or better. (29) Shearing contractors, Grazcos, offered free fares and blankets to shearers in an endeavour to break the strike. (30) Veteran shearer, Harry Rohr, was typical of shearers who stood up for their rights:

I have been a shearer for well over 40 years and have never ever taken part in a 'strike' in my life before...Mr. Falkiner and other wealthy graziers cry for a cut in the shearers' wages. But what about our rising costs?...Although the big graziers have the money, we have the skill to shear the sheep, which only the man that has been through the game knows the years of backache and sweat it takes to master. Once again, I ask all mates in the shearing game to stand firm. (31)
Those who didn’t stand firm were branded ‘scabs’ and the Branch Executive directed local committees that bans should only be placed where evidence backed up the allegations. (32) Ernie Ecob, N.S.W. Branch Secretary of the A.W.U., then a shearer, remembers Charlie Oliver addressing a meeting of one hundred and fifty three shearers at Coonamble and warning that if they weren’t careful they would end up with more ‘black’ shearers than ‘white’. (33) This was not very well received by the shearers who were striking in support of the Union and who were having financial difficulties. (34) However, the meeting endorsed support for the Executive Council’s actions. (35) The local committee had been very active in reporting scab shearers and had marched, on the previous Thursday, to Wingadiee station to view the ‘scab’ teams. Armed guards had been placed at all entrances to the station but the shearers were not provoked. (36) However, for men without work, the sight of scabs taking their jobs was a very bitter pill to swallow.

As the dispute continued local committees reported continuously to Oliver the names of shearers who ‘scabbed’ by working at Commissioner Donovan’s reduced 1956 rates. Mr. R.R. Donaldson of the Bourke Committee reported:

On receiving word that a scab team had arrived at Byrock on Saturday last by train several members of the Bourke Committee and myself proceeded there to investigate.

We found that the Grazcos adopting their usual “hush hush” policy had engaged a Bourke taxi truck to pick up the scabs at Byrock.
Whilst at Byrock the train arrived (Tuesday) and several Youths with College Blazers were met by Mr. Carden the Bourke Brazcos representative.

They were rushed off along the Brewarrina road and we followed and found that they turned off one mile from Brewarrina and went to Merriman Station, owned by Mrs Ryan and managed by her brother Mr. Charlie McGirr.

We were refused admittance to the property but found out that this was the second half of the team the others being the ones we had set out to investigate....We are hopeful that the local committee will obtain particulars of the team mentioned.(37)

Local committee secretary, Neil Byron, was later able to report that the incompetency of the 'college blazer' team resulted in the 'team of termites' getting the sack. The Merriman sheep then heavy with fifteen months wool needed help and the owners sensibly employed a local team at the old rates.(38) Oliver replied to Byron:

The Bourke Committee has done an excellent job, and are to be congratulated. The position with our kindred Unions is much better than it was, the A.R.U. appear to be taking a definite stand, and are instructing the members not to handle wool declared "black" by the A.W.U.
I was in the Walgett-Collarenebri districts over last week-end and had excellent meetings in both centres. It is my view that the Union is 100 per cent in this area and there is no possibility of the graziers breaking through, in fact most graziers are happy to co-operate with our members.

The position at Moree while generally sound from a Union point of view, is clouded by the actions of certain of our members, however it would be too much to expect from every centre the high standard that has been set by the Bourke Committee.

There are movements by intermediaries of the Graziers' Association for a settlement of the dispute. The Executive Council will meet on the 18th, and I have no doubt certain aspects of the general picture will be discussed.(39)

At all times Oliver tried to hose down the press speculation about violence occurring at shearing sheds. Reports of riots at Midkin sheep station, in the Moree area, were answered by Oliver with photographs of the men peacefully gathering at the station, where he said:

Not only were the men well-behaved - and strictly sober - but they did not carry one stick which is more than could be said of one grazier who carried a revolver under his cardigan, and another who was toying with a .303 rifle.
I was in the Walgett-Collarenebri districts over last week-end and had excellent meetings in both centres. It is my view that the Union is 100 per cent in this area and there is no possibility of the graziers breaking through, in fact most graziers are happy to co-operate with our members.

The position at Moree while generally sound from a Union point of view, is clouded by the actions of certain of our members, however it would be too much to expect from every centre the high standard that has been set by the Bourke Committee.

There are movements by intermediaries of the Graziers' Association for a settlement of the dispute. The Executive Council will meet on the 18th, and I have no doubt certain aspects of the general picture will be discussed. (39)

At all times Oliver tried to hush down the press speculation about violence occurring at shearing sheds. Reports of riots at Midkin sheep station, in the Moree area, were answered by Oliver with photographs of the men peacefully gathering at the station, where he said:

Not only were the men well-behaved - and strictly sober - but they did not carry one stick which is more than could be said of one grazier who carried a revolver under his cardigan, and another who was toying with a .303 rifle.
As a test of bona fides the police were asked to search the cars 
of the pastoral workers for fire-arms - and the limbs of the law 
replied, "That would be too silly."(40)

During the dispute the police were often called out to properties by the 
local graziers. Their involvement was in no way directed by the State Labor 
Government, unlike the 1890's disputes where the conservative government used 
the police as agents of control against striking shearers. However, the 
Union President did receive a complaint from the Merriwa Local Committee 
secretary, W.J. Pittman, about police involvement:

The statement was made this morning Sunday 17th June in the 
hearing of Vi Brown, J.P., B. Price our President, J.P. and 
myself by K. Stevens of Merryglin, Merriwa, that the Sargent (sic) 
of Police Merriwa asked him the said K. Stevens that if he 
, wanted work to see Contractor Young as he would give him work.

Contractor Young as you know is Black. Also he said he was 
prepared to back this in court of law. You mentioned when at 
Merriwa that you would see the Premier on somewhat similar 
statements.(41)

It is a measure of the power that Oliver had, as Union Secretary, that he 
immediately wrote to Premier Joe Cahill:
I refer to Police Sergeant Swan and Constable King of Merriwa.
I am advised on very good authority, which can be disclosed should
the necessity arise, that the persons mentioned are continually
endeavouring to influence Union members to accept employment with
a shearing contractor named Young at rates which do not accord with
the policy of this Union. While I, and my Union, have a very high
regard for the Police Force and the work they do we feel that the
actions of these particular officers are unwarranted.

Having regard to all the circumstances it would be appreciated
if you would interest yourself in the matter.(42)

The Premier ordered an investigation and reported back to Oliver:

...I arranged with the Commissioner of Police for this matter to be
investigated specially. The Commission has now reported that
having considered the report furnished by the investigating
officer he is satisfied that there is no justification for the
allegation made against the abovenamed members of the Police
Force.

The file is available for your perusal at the Premier's Department
should you wish to see it.(43)

Possibly the investigating officer had whitewashed the matter. However, the
mere fact that an investigation had taken place may have been sufficient to
make other police officers more cautious about expressing their views.

It must be remembered that the shearing dispute was taking place during the last throes of the battle to regain control of the New South Wales Labor Party. Consequently, a union member publicly criticised Dougherty’s handling of the dispute in a report in the Daily Telegraph of 15 May 1956, and put the view that he was spending too much time on politics. Oliver defended Dougherty in the next day’s issue of the Worker:

His interest in political affairs has the approval of the Union and the policy he represents is laid down by the Union’s governing authority. Whatever motivates Mr. Dougherty’s critics they can be assured there will be no division in the Union leadership on the question of industrial or political policy.(44)

Oliver’s defence of Dougherty, who was in Queensland at the time, may have been to quickly allay any suggestion that there was a division in the leadership. It was also a statement of support for Dougherty whose devotion to the Union was unquestionable. Dougherty was a man of considerable strength who had continued his duties, despite the sudden death of his wife a few days before 1956 Annual Convention. This tragedy left Dougherty with the sole responsibility for bringing up their twenty month old son.(45)

Any criticism of the leadership was quickly dispelled with the Union’s victory in the High Court of Australia. Donovan’s interim decision had also extended the Federal Award to apply to non-unionists. The Union had
Challenged the authority of Commissioner Donovan to extend the coverage. Doolan's belief that the Graziers' Association's application to extend the Federal Award to cover non-unionists was "...a carefully conceived plan to circumvent the N.S.W. State Pastoral Award." (46) It was the State Award which had coverage for non-unionists and no application had been made to vary the State Award. As the graziers were attempting to break the strength of the Union, by employing non-unionists, as well as lowering the wage rates, they obviously would not pay the higher State Award rate. If the graziers were able to pay non-unionists under the interim Federal Award they gained two fold. Firstly, it weakened the Union and secondly it decreased the costs of the graziers. When the court found in favour of the A.W.U. the Graziers' Association could no longer rely on the willingness of non-union members to work at the lower rate when they should legally be paid under the State Award, which had not been reduced.

By a majority of five to one the Court found in favour of the Union. (47)

The effect of the judgement was explained by Mr. Cecil O'Dea, A.W.U. Solicitor:

Graziers would be prevented from employing non-unionists at the new 1956 rates prescribed by Commissioner Donovan....because such employment is governed by the State Pastoral Award, which requires payment of the old rates...non-unionists employed by graziers at the new 1956 rates have been employed illegally and in breach of the State Award, in which case graziers are exposed to prosecution at the instance of the A.W.U. or of the State's authorities. (48)
challenged the authority of Commissioner Donovan to extend the coverage. Dougherty believed that the Graziers' Association's application to extend the Federal Award to cover non-unionists was "...a carefully conceived plan...to circumvent the N.S.W. State Pastoral Award." (46) It was the State Award which had coverage for non-unionists and no application had been made to vary the State Award. As the graziers were attempting to break the strength of the Union, by employing non-unionists, as well as lowering the wage rates, they obviously would not pay the higher State Award rate. If the graziers were able to pay non-unionists under the interim Federal Award they gained two fold. Firstly, it weakened the Union and secondly it decreased the costs of the graziers. When the court found in favour of the A.W.U. the Graziers' Association could no longer rely on the willingness of non-union members to work at the lower rate when they should legally be paid under the State Award, which had not been reduced.

By a majority of five to one the Court found in favour of the Union. (47)

The effect of the judgement was explained by Mr. Cecil O'Dea, A.W.U. solicitor:

Graziers would be prevented from employing non-unionists at the new 1956 rates prescribed by Commission Donovan...because such employment is governed by the State Pastoral Award, which requires payment of the old rates...non-unionists employed by graziers at the new 1956 rates have been employed illegally and in breach of the State Award, in which case graziers are exposed to prosecution at the instance of the A.W.U. or of the State's authorities. (48)
The Graziers' Federal Council finally accepted the terms of the Executive Council and the four months dispute ended with a settlement on 28 June.

Commissioner Donovan varied the Federal Pastoral Award by proclaiming a new interim award increasing the 1955 rates by three shillings and sixpence.(49) The settlement also provided that all bans would be lifted by 2 July 1956 and that resumption of the hearing would begin on 23 July 1956.(50)

Although the dispute was over and the bans officially lifted shearers such as Ernie Ecob, who had stood up for their rights against the graziers, found some graziers would not employ them. Altogether Ernie Ecob was out of work for six months.(51) Bitterness continued over shearers and contractors who had worked at the Donovan rates and had been declared 'black'.

One of the worst legacies of bitterness from the dispute was in the Moree area. In April the Branch President, J. King, had received a telephone call from a member, Len Mead, which so alarmed King that he wrote to him immediately:

Further to our telephone conversation of today in which you advised me that you had been appointed as an organiser for the Moree Local Committee at a salary of thirty pounds per week to organise in the Moree district...to be paid by the Local Committee at Moree.

I explained to you that the Branch Secretary Mr. Oliver was
absent in the Country and will not be back in the office until late this week, and in these circumstances I will have no opportunity of discussing with him the proposition that you have advised me of.

However you can appreciate that all organisers must be appointed by the Branch Executive in the terms of the Rules and Constitution, as your appointment has not been made within the terms of these Rules, I have to advise you that until such time as the Branch Secretary returns to Sydney, and this position is discussed with him you should be most careful not to represent yourself as being a Union official, and take the greatest care not to become involved in any accidents or disputations that could involve you in litigation. (52)

King, as Branch President, was alarmed for two reasons. Firstly, Local Committees were not meant to use levy funds to pay committee members. All funds were to be sent to the Union for distribution when needed. Secondly, Committees had no power under the Rules to appoint Organisers, this was the prerogative of the Branch Executive. The Moree Committee was showing an alarming streak of independence which might prove to be a problem.

The independence of the Moree Committee was later to provoke enormous bitterness. In its zeal the Committee placed a black ban on a contractor named McKechnie for allegedly paying the Donovan rates. This was strenuously denied by Mr. McKechnie in a telephone call and letter to the
Union President:

I was shearing at Boolooroo and Glenroy for the old Award...I had 8 shearers there, and after the ban was imposed upon me 4 of them left....There are still 11,000 sheep to be shorn....I had a good team of shearers commence at Balang in March, and after shearing for two days and I had paid them quite a lot of money before the start, the Strike Committee terrified them so much, mainly two of them on the outside going to work on the Sunday evening that they informed their mates and all left at midnight on Sunday night...The local men did everything possible to stop me starting a second team two weeks ago, but despite their efforts I got a team there to shear and they have been working ever since with quite good results. However, the threats were so great I had to get the Mungindi Police to be ready on call. The sergeant visited the shed on one or two occasions and found the men to be very afraid and timid.

I will conclude by saying that, up until the present time I have not conducted sheds at the New Award Rates and all other troubles referred to have been given the full 1955 Award.(53)

McKechnie's letter was believed, and the significance of the words 'up until the present time' not understood. On 15 April Charlie Oliver wrote to Len Mead advising that the Executive Council had decided that the black ban on McKechnie was 'wrongly imposed'. Oliver warned:
In accordance with the directions of Executive Council, you will immediately remove any black ban that may have been imposed on Shearing Contractor J. McKechnie.

It should be clearly understood that failure to give effect to Council's direction could result in action being taken against the members of the Union concerned in the alleged ban. (54)

Unfortunately, McKechnie, who protested that he was innocent 'up until that time', was by 30 April 1956 taking a team to Midkin station and paying the Donovan rates. At a meeting, attended by Oliver, at Moree a resolution was carried:

In accordance with the recommendation of Executive Council, this meeting of pastoral workers, held at Moree on Monday, April 30, 1956, declares that Mr. W.J. McKechnie, Shearing Contractor of Moree, has employed non-Union labor in shearing operations at Midkin at rates which contravene Union policy. This meeting therefore recommends that members of the Union do not accept employment with Shearing Contractor W.J. McKechnie, now or ever. (55)

The Moree Committee had also placed a black ban 'for all time' on Ron Hunter of Colmlea. Hunter, was not slow to retaliate and served summons on committee members for trespass, intimidation and unlawful entry. (56) Later
three shearers, including the brother of Len Mead, were served with a summons for damages for conspiracy for the amount of one thousand pounds. (57) The Union's solicitor, Mr. Cecil O'Dea, was instructed to assist the members. He flew to Moree with Counsel, Lionel Murphy, where the Magistrate called for a Special Magistrate from Sydney to hear the charges. (58)

The major condition, by the graziers, for the settlement of the dispute on 28 June 1956, was that the Union would lift all bans by 2 July 1956. This undertaking by the Executive Council was impossible to enforce and was ignored by the Moree Committee. At a pastoral conference held in Sydney on 7th July 1956, attended by approximately fifty delegates, the matter came to a head. L.G. McKay, Secretary of the Cowra Local Committee, wrote a report to his members:

The delegate from this centre, Len Mead, Secretary, Moree Committee, after a very heated discussion between the Branch Secretary and himself, he gave his books, tickets, etc. to Charlie Oliver and left the conference. He was followed out of the room by the Chairman, Joe King, and was asked to remain at the conference but refused. Charlie Oliver told Mead he had no personal grudge against him but said he would call a meeting of Union Officials and have Mead sacked from the position as Secretary of the Moree Committee, as he did not think Mead capable of holding the position and to represent the A.W.U. at Moree.
Mead stated and he spoke only to the delegates as he left the room. (These are Mead’s own words). Delegates go home and tell your mates if they come to Moree to shear or work for McKechnie, Grazcos or Irish that it would not be healthy. (59)

Mead’s implied threat could not be tolerated. True to his word Oliver and the Branch Executive withdrew their support from the Moree Committee. Oliver and Branch President J. King were authorised to travel to Moree to discuss matters with the members and to form a new committee. (60) Despite their efforts Mead and his unauthorised committee continued to blacklist sheds. (61)

Oliver received a letter from Warren C. Hunter, Chairman of the local Graziers’ Association complaining that black bans were still being carried out in Moree, Inverell and Glen Innes. (62) He wrote back to S.S. Ick-Hewins, the Secretary of the Graziers’ Association at their head office:

I do not propose to write to Mr. Hunter, but you have my assurance that the spirit of the settlement of the pastoral dispute will be carried out and everything possible will be done to impress on the membership the necessity of observing the terms of settlement.

I am receiving numerous complaints from Union members that they are being refused employment because of happenings during the
dispute. However, these are matters that can be cleared up by discussion should such a course be warranted. (63)

Although the Moree Committee had no official standing Mead continued to act as if they did. On 5 August he wrote to Cec Newton of Narrabri, calling for a meeting of members on 19 August to discuss the "..all important bug bear the levys. We have been advised by Sydney to send nine hundred pounds to cover cost of McKechnie versus Mead and others". (64) Oliver, receiving so many letters regarding the Moree committee, thought that they warranted a printed reply:

I am in receipt of letters from several Committees protesting against the Union withdrawing support to the Moree Committee reference the Court cases of Len Mead and Company.

The position at Moree is, every rule of the Union has been broken, the decisions of the Union's governing authorities have been consistently flouted, a direction given repeatedly on the methods to be adopted in respect to levies have not been carried out, and not one pound has been received at this office from Mr. Mead or the Moree Committee as a whole. Until such time as Mr. Mead and his Committee are prepared to obey proper decisions of the Union and observe in detail its Constitution and Rules he will get no recognition from the Union administration and, in fact, he leaves himself open, with his Committee, to be dealt with in the Courts of this country. (65)
Whilst Oliver was assuring the Graziers' Association that the terms of settlement were being honoured and was vehement in his opposition to the Moree Committee's activities, he was also actively encouraging retaliation against contractors. J. Wiltshire had written to Oliver on 2 July asking for information on black bans on contractors who employed scab labour. Wiltshire said '...would you send us a complete scab-list that covers all areas of the strike. This is important to us because in future we would like to give any scabs visiting Bingara a poor reception.' Oliver's reply was illuminating:

The Court has ordered all bans, restrictions and limitations to be lifted, but it is a matter for our members own discretion as to whom they choose to work for.

The List of offenders is being prepared and you should receive one within a day or two.

The list of offenders was also sent to R.B. Mawbey, Secretary of the Dubbo Local Committee. Mawbey asked whether black bans had been lifted on Grazcos. Again Oliver replies '...it is entirely a matter for members themselves to decide who they wish to work for.'

Oliver may have meant that members should choose not to work for contractors who had used scab labour. Mr. Wiltshire obviously interpreted Oliver's letter in a different way by actively attempting to stop members from
working with contractors on the black list. On 12 October 1956 Oliver writes again to Wiltshire warning him:

I am in receipt of a letter from Mr. K.R. Brown...Mr. Brown states that he at no time offended against the Union during the recent dispute...when the dispute was settled Mr. Brown accepted employment with Shearing Contractor Bill McKechnie. Because of this he was being treated as an offender against Union policy.

I write this letter to advise you that it is inviting legal action against yourself and others to attempt to prevent Mr. Brown and others from working for Mr. McKechnie.

I quite appreciate the strong feeling of hostility that exists against Mr. McKechnie, and I personally can assure you that I have the utmost contempt for this employer; but we cannot support the prevention of workers accepting employment with him at rates the Union has agreed to accept, as to do so would involve the Union in litigation which could only result in serious losses. It is one thing to advise workers not to work with Mr. McKechnie but it is entirely different when steps are taken to prevent them from working for Mr. McKechnie.(70)

By then Oliver was Vice President of the New South Wales Labor Party and attempting to bring harmony after the trauma of the split. Faced with the
need to encourage unity in the Party Oliver wanted to bring peace back to
the pastoral industry in order to stabilise membership in country branches.
Michael O'Shea, now a Vice President of the Union, remembers Oliver as being
conciliatory and his warning that there would be more black shearsers than
white if the bans continued. Oliver put his view at the July conference
of pastoral workers held in Sydney:

...two thirds of all offenders were cockies' sons and those
members that had been on the wrong track if in small cases were
dealt with seriously...would always remain scabs and instead of
showing these men where they were wrong and have their assistance
in the event of another dispute would only make the scab element
greater.

Oliver had to satisfy the members who were still bitter over the dispute.
He had also to walk the fine line of keeping within the agreement and the
law. At the Annual Convention of 1957 Oliver moved a suspension of standing
orders to once and for all put the matter of black bans to rest. Convention
later carried unanimously:

That as one of the clauses of the Agreement between the A.W.U.
and the Graziers' Association entered into at the time of the
successful culmination of the disputes between the two organisations
was that all bans and limitations imposed by both organisations were
to be lifted, and as that undertaking was also subsequently given to
the Arbitration Tribunals that Convention decides that the policy of
need to encourage unity in the Party Oliver wanted to bring peace back to the pastoral industry in order to stabilise membership in country branches. Michael O'Shea, now a Vice President of the Union, remembers Oliver as being conciliatory and his warning that there would be more black shearers than white if the bans continued. Oliver put his view at the July conference of pastoral workers held in Sydney:

...two thirds of all offenders were cockies' sons and those members that had been on the wrong track if in small cases were dealt with seriously...would always remain scabs and instead of showing these men where they were wrong and have their assistance in the event of another dispute would only make the scab element greater.

Oliver had to satisfy the members who were still bitter over the dispute. He had also to walk the fine line of keeping within the agreement and the law. At the Annual Convention of 1957 Oliver moved a suspension of standing orders to once and for all put the matter of black bans to rest. Convention later carried unanimously:

That as one of the clauses of the Agreement between the A.W.U. and the Graziers' Association entered into at the time of the successful culmination of the disputes between the two organisations was that all bans and limitations imposed by both organisations were to be lifted, and as that undertaking was also subsequently given to the Arbitration Tribunals that Convention decides that the policy of
the Union shall be in conformity with that undertaking.

Members are therefore instructed by this Convention to conform to the
policy of the Union in regarding to the lifting of all bans and
limitations in regard to the Pastoral Industry.

This Convention of the A.W.U. realises that whilst it cannot compel
the various Braziers' Associations and their auxiliaries to honour
undertakings given by them it can as it has in the past set an
example as an organisation which honours its undertakings.

This Convention therefore condemns the various Pastoral Associations
and Employers in the Pastoral Industry for not honouring their
obligations to lift all bans and limitations from workers in this
industry.(73)

Oliver had won two significant battles in 1956. The battle for control of
New South Wales Labor and the battle with the Union's traditional enemies,
the graziers. The pastoral dispute brought to Oliver's attention men whom
he would later select as Union officials. The Secretary of the Cowra
Committee, L.G. McKay, became a favoured son of Oliver's until his ambition
got out of control. R.B. Mawbey, Secretary of the Dubbo Committee, was
chosen by Oliver to replace him as Branch Secretary. Later Oliver elevated
Mawbey to the Industrial Commission and chose Ernie Ecob as Branch
Secretary. In retrospect the pastoral dispute of 1956 was the catalyst
which produced men of sufficient calibre to lead the Union. Their mutual
problem was that Oliver refused to let go.
Chapter 7 - A Dangerous Crusade.

'And one should bear in mind that there is nothing more difficult to
execute nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than
to introduce a new system of things: for he who introduces it has all
those who profit from the old system as his enemies...' (1)

Oliver began 1957 in a stronger position than the previous year. Fortune
had smiled again. The Federal Labor Executive and Dougherty, the prince of
power, had made him a Vice President of the New South Wales Labor Party.
His position in the Union was strong as he and Dougherty could take credit
for winning the battle against the Graziers' Association. However, the
legacy of bitterness from the pastoral dispute equalled that of the
bitterness in the Party. The Union had traditionally fostered Labor Party
branches in the country. Oliver's task was reconstruction and
reconciliation in both organisations. However, for the prince whose crusade
had been delayed by the struggle with the Groupers, the aim was to abolish
the Legislative Council.

As he had done before Dougherty used Annual Convention to attack State Labor
politicians. Oliver had moved a resolution, from Yanga Station, Balranald,
concerning insufficient Hut Inspectors employed by the Government to monitor
the conditions of pastoral workers' accommodation. In debate Oliver said he had repeatedly asked the Government to employ more hut inspectors but they cried poor. Where there had been six inspectors there were now only two, insufficient to inspect more than 37,000 pastoral properties.(2) His argument was simply that the Rural Workers' Accommodation Act legislation should be policed by the Government. However, he was also critical of the membership:

In New South Wales it was the fault of a lot of the members themselves that more was not done, because they agreed and connived with employers to give their legal rights away.(3)

In essence Oliver was only giving the matter a hearing because of complaints from the membership. It is obvious that he was not prepared to accept blame about poor standards of accommodation. Legislation provided that employers had obligations to ensure proper facilities and the Government's duty was to enforce that legislation. As Branch Secretary of the Union his duty was to his members, but as Vice President of the Labor Party he was careful not to personalise the debate by making virulent attacks on the quality of Macquarie Street Labor politicians.

The Sydney Morning Herald described Dougherty as indulging in an emotional outburst against the Macquarie Street Labor politicians, shouting at the delegates who sat silent with only an occasional 'hear hear'.(4) Dougherty slated the Government for their lack of concern for A.W.U.
members. He said they were ignored because they had no say in pre-selection processes:

A.L.P. Branches are formed in the towns and cities, and the itinerant shearers cannot become a member of a Branch of the A.L.P. ... We are held in contempt by the politicians down there in Macquarie Street because the A.W.U. has been denuded of any part in the affairs of the A.L.P. in this State.

The A.W.U. now or never will demand the right of every trade union in this State to get back to where the Labor Party was formed. ... The Trade Unions brought it into being and to-day the Trade Unions are excommunicated. A bunch of go-getters, legal experts, retired or not retired publicans, intellectual cranks and professors are running the Labor Party in this State.

... If a man joins the A.L.P. as a navvy, he will voice his views as a worker, but he will be immediately beaten on the post by some brilliant university crank, and within two years a man who should belong and does belong to the Liberal Party, gets the Labor endorsement.

Show me in the last 10 years, a true, honest-to-goodness working man elected in the State or Federal sphere. We have no true Labor men, and the reason is that the franchise has been taken away from the trade unionists of this Commonwealth, and particularly of the major
State of Australia, and so we have the contempt of Macquarie Street. Six Hut Inspectors originally, and only two now! The Hut Inspectors are not going to be employed because, after all, the A.W.U. has no say in the election of the politician in this State.

There are certain Ministers of this Crown who would lose their seats next election if the A.W.U. member had the right to vote as such at a plebiscite...The time has come now for this Union, this most powerful Union in the Commonwealth, that has at least six times as much money as any other Union in Australia, at least four times as many members as any other Union, and which pays, he would suggest, nine times the tax in this State of all the other trade unions put together, must demand the right to be recognised as a powerful body - must demand that the rank and file of the Trade Union Movement in New South Wales have the undeniable right, as members of affiliated Unions, to record their vote at plebiscites for the men they want to represent them as members of the Labor Party.

...we had a struggle to get two men on the State Executive when the new Executive was formed...After all there is a saying that if you pay the piper you are entitled to call the tune. We are paying the piper - the trade unionists of New South Wales - but the 'Movement' is still calling the tune.(5)

Clearly the settlement of the Labor dispute in New South Wales had not satisfied Dougherty. His assertion that the Movement still controlled
Macquarie Street and was denying the power of the A.W.U. indicates that he still saw himself as the outsider hammering to take over the citadel of power. Unlike Oliver, Dougherty, had decided that he would not nominate for Labor Party office in 1956. It is open for conjecture whether his personal tragedy, with the sudden death of his wife in January 1956 leaving him to bring up an infant son, was the reason for that decision. It may have been that he had made too many enemies to guarantee sufficient numbers for his election at Conference. There was great bitterness in Dougherty's attack on the Cahill Government. His demand that A.W.U. itinerant workers should be able to vote in pre-selections, because the Union was the richest trade union, indicates his willingness to use financial strength to gain political power. Dougherty is still the hater, the kicker of heads, not interested in reconciliation and stability but thriving on power and willing to use it.

It is possible that Oliver was caught unaware by Dougherty's outburst. The matter of the Hut Inspectors had been debated at the Half Yearly Meeting of the New South Wales Branch of the Union. The meeting had recommended that the Government utilise the two Inspectors in the Western Division and that Inspectors of the Department of Labour and Industry be given responsibility for hut inspections. (6) The meeting had expressed congratulations to Premier Cahill on "...the fight he put up for the wage workers of this State in reclaiming and retaining the basic wage". (7) The meeting had also recommended:

In view of the disruption that has existed in the Labour(sic) Party caused by scabs that have sneaked into the Party and
gained membership of A.L.P. Branches, this meeting recommends to all Local Committees that they take every possible step to co-operate with the local A.L.P. Branches in all activity to protect Union conditions, for progress generally in their districts and to encourage the greatest number of workers to become politically active, and make certain that a Federal Labour (sic) Government is returned at the next election.(8)

The tenor of these resolutions had been constructive concentrating on the Union and the Party working together. Dougherty's claim that the Union was being denied its rightful position by remnants of the Movement in Macquarie Street, may have been accurate, but was totally destructive.

Dougherty was reported incorrectly by the Daily Telegraph as saying that no honest men had come into the Parliament in the last ten years.(9) Premier Cahill, who had been invited by Dougherty to address Convention,(10) took the opportunity to defend his colleagues:

It has been said that in the past ten years no honest man has come to Parliament...amongst the men who have come in the last 10 years are men who will be the future Ministers of the Labor Government in New South Wales - men who worked in the factory and who worked in the workshop - men who have devoted their lives to the uplifting of the masses, and the enlarging of the sphere of influence of the Labor Movement.
I just don't know how far - how all-embracing this statement was - but if it was as it was made to appear in the press, I must say I was amazed to know that it was made by a gentleman who helped out his Party so greatly 12 months ago.

All I can say is that those men are men of honour; there has not been one publican amongst the men who have come in in the last 10 years. Each one of the men who has come in in the last 10 years has taken his place in the House on some of the most difficult legislation, and contributions to debate have not been surpassed by any member of the Opposition...Notwithstanding the difficulties that surrounded the Labor Movement in this State 12 months ago, we were able to keep our Party intact.(11)

The poor publicans of New South Wales, who had been insulted by Dougherty, were no better served by Cahill's denial that no publicans had been elected to the Parliament in the last ten years. Dougherty offered no apology to the Premier but offered to send him a copy of the transcript so that he could have an accurate view of what he had said. He then praised Cahill for his leadership but reiterated that the Union had the right to criticise the Government if it was not getting service.(12) A few days later Dougherty told the Sydney Morning Herald that he had nothing but admiration for Cahill and had been misquoted in the Daily Telegraph. He added he believed all
members of the State Parliamentary Labor Party were honest men. In the same article Oliver put his view:

Joe Cahill is a capable, astute leader. The Labor Party need have no fear while Joe Cahill is at its head. (13)

As Vice President of the Labor Party Oliver attempted to close the chapter but the speech had annoyed the new President of the N.S.W. Branch of the Labor Party, F.H. Campbell, of the Electrical Trades' Union, who had worked with Dougherty to oust the previous Executive. The remarks were "..intemperate and irresponsible." said Campbell. (14) Dougherty countered with the question "..did he favour the rights of A.W.U. members to vote in pre-selections? If not he is not fit to be President of the A.L.P." (15) Campbell not to be outdone said he did not regard Dougherty as a 'king-maker' and that he would debate the matter at State Conference. (16)

At the Central Executive meeting of the Labor Party on 8 February 1957 letters were received from the Eastwood and Stockton Branches requesting the Executive to take action regarding the statements allegedly made by Dougherty at the A.W.U. Convention. The Officers' Report recommended:

That the officers of the Party take the necessary steps to ascertain the truthfulness or otherwise of the statements complained of, and that Mr. Dougherty be interviewed in respect to same. (17)
As was their practice the Officers, including Oliver, had met prior to the meeting to discuss their report to the Central Executive. (18) As Oliver knew perfectly well what had been said at Convention by Dougherty the Officers' recommendation appears to have been a delaying tactic. This did not satisfy others. C. Wallace and J. Fitzgerald moved an amendment to the Officers' Report that Dougherty be asked by letter the truthfulness of press reports. The amendment was lost. (19) The matter may well have been discussed with Premier Cahill as Oliver had an appointment with him the next day. (20)

At the next Central Executive meeting on 22 February 1957, in Campbell's absence, Oliver was in the chair. He reported that Dougherty had not been interviewed due to the President being occupied by an industrial dispute within his Union. Another delaying tactic which annoyed the Executive and the report was received with an amendment that it was not regarded as satisfactory. (21)

The Federal Conference was held in Brisbane on 11 to 15 March 1957. New South Wales delegates were Oliver, F.H. Campbell, J. Blackburn, A. Platt, A. Mulvihill and W.R. Colbourne. (22) Oliver remembered the Conference because he supported Joe Cahill over changes to uniform taxation legislation:

Old Doc got hold of me, said Joe's doing it wrong going against Party policy, I had a bit of a quarrel with him.

Pat Kennelly came over and discussed electoral prospects.
He said we won't do any good with Doc, or Arthur, what we should do is pick somebody out and sell him. Build him up. I said who do you have in mind. Whitlam....Pat got him up as Deputy Leader. (23)

Dougherty was not a delegate but he followed the Conference closely and the Worker published a report on its decisions. (24) Dougherty couldn't resist criticising the Federal President, J. Chamberlain for alleged comments reported in the press:

When will Labor Conferences put a padlock on the lips of "spokesmen" who take it upon themselves to "interpret" what delegates mean in the course of Conference debates?

Delegates decisions are final and conclusive and should not be exposed to the risk of Boofhead "interpretations" by any officials not authorised to embark on an interpretation holiday.

For example – if correctly reported – A.L.P. President, Mr. Chamberlain – explained that the term "democratic" was thrown into the definition of "democratic socialism" as one would add a fifth wheel to a coach – a redundancy.
The Conference said nothing about the word "democracy" being redundant or unnecessary and a snide smokescreen to trick electors.

If Mr. Chamberlain is going to "interpret" Conference, who is going to "interpret" Mr. Chamberlain?(25)

Dougherty may have been paying back an old score to left winger Chamberlain but his comments added more fuel to the fire. The Sun reported that the A.L.P. State Executive might be dealing with Dougherty over his Annual Convention speech and his remarks about Mr. Chamberlain.(26)

This time Oliver and Colbourne were forced to act and Colbourne used Oliver as an intermediary. Charlie telephoned Dougherty, who was cautious enough to make a written record of the call.(27) Oliver asked Dougherty to talk to the State Executive over statements he had made at the Convention. Dougherty replied that he had read in the press that the officers wanted to interview him, but it was all very vague and that he would not go down. Dougherty records:

Oliver said did I want it the hard way, would it not be better if I strolled down. I said I wanted Mr. Colbourne to just stroll up. Oliver then rang me back and said it was bad publicity for the Officer to go and see me. Well Colbourne had better contact me. Oliver talked about a Mr. Wallace continually bringing the matter up. I said I would not go down and the first thing Colbourne has to
do is to contact me by telephone or by letter, preferably by letter. So I'm still in the position though I do not know what it is all about, but I no doubt will find out in due course. (28)

Such innocence from Dougherty who knew perfectly well what is was all about. Attached to the report of the telephone call was a copy of the Minutes of the Central Executive meeting on 8th February 1957 which had the amendment moved by Mr. C. Wallace, that Dougherty be contacted by letter to ascertain the truth of statements reported in the press. (29) Oliver could have given him a copy of the Minutes when the matter was first discussed, or the other A.W.U. nominee on the Executive, Joe King, N.S.W. Branch President who had worked with Dougherty since 1946 might have done so. (30) The relationship between Oliver and Dougherty had clearly changed. Oliver was now part of the Labor machine and Dougherty was becoming an embarrassment for the machine. There is no record of any meeting between Colbourne and Dougherty or any further discussion by the Central Executive.

However, Dougherty is far from silent and attacks the office of Governor of New South Wales due to be vacated in August 1957 on the resignation of Sir John Northcote:

Labor's platform stands four-square for the abolition of this moth-eaten post, introduced by the Conservative silvertails in the days before crinolines and preserved by Tory parasites in the interests of Society drones with nothing else to do except think by day and dream by night of snooty garden parties at
Government House as privileged guests of some flunkey despatched to the Colonies for recuperative purposes and/or incidentally for the good of the family reputation in the Old Dart.(31)

It is typical of Dougherty that although he is attacking the Office of Governor his criticism is aimed at the Labor Party for not carrying out their policy. Sarcastically he pointed out that with a majority in both Houses of the State Parliament 'Now is the hour to say "good-bye" to all the gold braid and the cocked helmets that have been mocking democratic sentiments in New South Wales ever since Labor became of age.'(32) His sentiments were shared by Delegates at the June State Labor Conference who carried an amendment, by eighty votes, to 'forge ahead with the abolition of the post of State Governor.'(33)

It was a successful Conference for Oliver and the Party officers as they were re-elected unopposed.(34) The A.W.U. delegation was hand picked by Oliver. There was no election only names submitted to the Branch Executive at its January meeting and there is no record of the delegates chosen.(35) However, judging by a resolution moved at the Annual General Meeting of the Union held on 27 July 1957, that the Branch Executive instruct A.L.P. Conference delegates when voting on important issues,(36) there must have been some delegates who voted against an important issue. The resolution was moved by F. Williamson and W. Adams. Adams was a delegate to the Labor Council(37) and as such must have had Oliver's support. Williamson had been successful, at the January Half-yearly meeting of the Union, in moving that an A.L.P. committee investigate why the Party had not implemented any
major planks after 60 years. (38) The resolution to bind delegates' votes would have been in Oliver's interest. However, the resolution was lost. (39) A more vital resolution was carried:

While retaining the belief that the Legislative Council should be abolished, this meeting urges on the Union to seek representation in the Legislative Council as the best means of bringing about abolition. (40)

It is obvious that a deal had been made between the A.W.U. and the Labor Party Executive that the next vacancy would go to the Union. By September there was a casual vacancy in the Legislative Council caused by the death of the Hon. John Stewart, who had ten more years of his third term in office to run. (41) Dougherty stood against thirty three other candidates. (42) John Armitage then a member of the Central Executive, recalls being asked by Joe Fitzgerald another member of the Executive, to support Dougherty, which he did. Later Oliver indicated to him that he was naive to have given Dougherty support. Armitage states 'Charlie in effect told me I was wrong, he had to support him but I didn't. What he was saying was I had made a mistake.' (43) In the ballot conducted by the Central Executive on 6 September 1957 Dougherty was the successful candidate. (44)

Dougherty had only one aim in taking office. In his maiden speech on 12 November 1957 he said:
Before I came to this Chamber I signed a pledge that I would do all within my power to abolish the Legislative Council. I do not take my word lightly; never in my life have I given a promise and failed to do my utmost to keep it.....This has been in the minds of Labor men and women since 1894, when it first became a plank in the platform of the Australian Labor Party.

...I subscribe entirely to the statement made some months ago by the Premier that there is no possibility that Labor will be defeated in this State for the next ten years. It is argued that if the almost impossible happened, and the non-Labor forces again won a general election Labor would still have a majority in this House and be able to defeat any legislation sent forward from the Legislative Assembly, which we considered not to be in the best interests of the people.

That is not democracy; if we believe in democracy we must believe in it completely. If we consider that the people are to be governed by their elected representatives, then no matter what political color the Government might be, it should be able to govern without being frustrated and restricted by a House of this nature, which is not elected by the people.

...I understood that there were two hurdles to jump before I could get here. The first was selection by the executive of the Labor Party. The second, and more difficult, was to be assured
of a Labor vote being given to me as the Labor-endorsed candidate in the two Houses of this Parliament....There is not the shadow of doubt in my mind that at least four men in the Labor Party, from one or both Houses, "ratted" on the Party. They voted against the endorsed Labor candidate to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the late Hon. John Stewart.

...I am not a politician. I am one of the crusaders sent into this Chamber to bring about its destruction. I shall be happy to take my part in what I hope will be the final act of this undemocratic and obsolete institution.

It would be impossible for me to spare the time away from my Union to come often to this Chamber. The Australian Workers' Union believes that its officials must give full time to the conduct of the organisation....I have no pretension about being a politician and should the House not be abolished in the reasonably-near future, I assure hon. members that I shall not see out my term.

...I shall not make many speeches here. If the Labor Party believes in democracy and the protection of our class in the future, it should trust democracy to do the right thing by the working class. We should rely on it to ensure that we shall always return democratic, working-class governments, and that this Chamber should be wiped out of existence.(45)
Dougherty's unequivocal statement of intent angered entrenched interests within the Party. By March 1958 the Labor Caucus in the Council carried a resolution to the Labor Executive drawing attention to the continued absence of Dougherty from the Council stating he had only appeared twice, firstly to be sworn in and secondly to give his maiden speech. Caucus Secretary, R.E. Savage, MLC, sent the resolution to the Labor Executive. For the second year in a row the Executive recommendation was that they would interview Dougherty and report back to the Executive. \(^{(46)}\)

F.H. Campbell, the President of N.S.W. Labor, possibly still smarting from his bout with Dougherty the previous year, gave the story to the *Sydney Morning Herald* which published it the day after the Executive meeting. \(^{(47)}\)

Not waiting to be summoned Dougherty dictated a letter to Colbourne saying the allegations were untrue and that Colbourne should put them in writing so that he could reply to them. His letter bears an annotation in his hand:

```
Since dictating this letter I will, as agreed over the phone, call at the A.L.P. office at approximately 8.20 a.m. on my way to work. TND \(^{(48)}\)
```

After their discussion Colbourne asked the Caucus Secretary to check his records. Savage was forced to back down and admitted Dougherty had attended six sittings of the Council. However, Savage complained that Dougherty had
not told him he would be absent and in a conversation with him later Dougherty had said he had not been told of the pairing system.(49)

The Officers were able to report back to the Central Executive:

The Officers are of the opinion that whilst there could have been some misunderstanding by Mr. Dougherty in respect to his obligations and the fact that he was not specifically advised of such obligations upon his election to the Upper House, that the interview with Mr. Dougherty has now removed these misunderstandings and he has been made aware of his obligations in respect to attendances at the House.(50)

The attack had been deflected and Colbourne wrote to Dougherty that as he was now aware of the procedures that there would be no further action.(51)

At the Labor Conference held in the Sydney Town Hall on 13 to 15 June 1958 the issue of abolition of the Legislative Council dominated the business. The Agenda Committee attempted to exclude the item but it was finally heard in the late afternoon of the last day. The resolution to direct the N.S.W. Labor Government to take the necessary steps for the immediate abolition of the Legislative Council, was declared lost on the voices by Campbell. Angry delegates were astonished at the President's attempt to kill the resolution and demanded a show of hands. Campbell declared the motion carried.(52)
Oliver's delegation of 37 was the largest at Conference (53) and supported Dougherty's push to abolish the Legislative Council. At the 1952 Annual Convention Oliver had attacked the Labor Party for not abolishing upper houses when they had a majority. (54) The Half Yearly Meeting, in 1957, had called for A.W.U. representation in the Upper House, obviously meaning Dougherty, as the first step towards its abolition. (55) Branch members had congratulated Dougherty on his 'fighting maiden speech' at the Half Yearly meeting of the Union in January. (56) All along the way Oliver had given support but if Armitage is correct in remembering his conversation with Oliver, shortly after Dougherty had been given pre-selection for the Council, it would appear that Oliver was conscious that Dougherty's crusade would be dangerous for the Party.

The Worker reported that the resolution was carried by a 6-1 majority. (57) However, the Australian Journal of Politics and History, whilst acknowledging it was a victory for Dougherty, puts the vote as being 2-1. (58) In the absence of Premier Cahill on a business tour of Canada and the United States (59), Acting Premier, R.J. Heffron, made an announcement that the Cabinet had decided to hold a referendum on the question of abolition. (60) On Cahill's return he said 'If we are going to do it, we won't lose any time. (61)

Cahill's Government was re-elected on 18 March 1959. Included in the Party's election policy was the proposal to hold a referendum on abolishing the Legislative Council. (62) Ironically, Joe Cahill died on 22 October 1959 (63) prior to the introduction of the legislation. R.J. Heffron tabled
the Constitution Amendment (Legislative Council Abolition) Bill in mid
November 1959. Somewhat prophetically he hoped:

...this bill will not meet with the pitfalls that have
countered Ministers in charge of similar measures in days
gone by.

When the debate is concluded and all the divisions are
complete I hope we shall be able to say that we are voting
out of existence an institution that is out of harmony with
the existing system of democracy...(64)

Just as the fight against the Broupers had culminated in the Split, the
train of events that Dougerty had set in motion resulted in the expulsion
from the Party of seven Members of the Upper House, who voted with the
Opposition that it would not deliberate the Bill and sent it back to the
Legislative Assembly.(65) The grand crusade soured as Labor lost control of
the Legislative Council.(66)

Vested interest had won and Dougerty lashed out:

They love the idea of the retention of this Chamber; they love
its privileges and the pomp and ceremony of office; more
especially they love the Gold Pass...I honestly and firmly
believe that in this Chamber are nine of the greatest scabs
and rats that I have ever seen in my life.(67)
The ensuing battle saw the Bill sent back to the Legislative Council to be rejected again on the same grounds that the Bill should have originated in the Council and not in the Assembly. Credit should be given to Heffron that he pressed on with the legislation by using Constitutional powers to have the Governor call a joint sitting of both Houses which passed the legislation for a referendum. When the conservative forces applied to the New South Wales Supreme Court, by then headed by Labor's former Leader, Chief Justice H.V. Evatt, to stop the referendum, the legislation was upheld. In a final bid the matter was taken to the High Court where the Supreme Court's judgement was upheld.

After a vigorous campaign by Premier Heffron the referendum to abolish the Legislative Council was held on 29 April, 1961. The voters of New South Wales rejected the referendum. Dougherty's crusade had failed and in its wake the Heffron Government had lost control of the Upper House. However, the Labor Party had honoured its policy and renewed its self respect. Dougherty honoured his election pledge and resigned to the Governor immediately.

The history of referenda in Australia shows the inherent conservatism of the voter. Dougherty later expressed surprise at the number who supported the abolition of the Council and fired a parting shot at the Labor Party New South Wales Branch by stating that the campaign had been casual and apathetic. Oliver, who was by then President of the Party, did not comment on Dougherty's criticism. If Dougherty was surprised at the support
for abolition, it would follow that he never expected it to be successful. Therefore, his motive would appear to have been to force the politicians to accept the fact that they were the servants of the Labor Party not its masters. If that is so he was successful but the price the Party paid was the loss of its majority in the Upper House. The defeated prince retreated to his A.W.U. kingdom leaving Oliver and Heffron to pick up the pieces of the once again shattered Party.
Chapter 8 - The Leader.

'A multitude without a leader is ineffective.'(1)

Whilst Dougherty's crusade was in full flight, Oliver was challenged within
the Union and at Labor Party Conference. Since his appointment as Union
Secretary in 1951, Oliver had been re-elected unopposed at each triennial
election. However, it became obvious early in 1958 that there was a
pretender for his throne.

At Annual Convention, so often the stage for Oliver and Dougherty, a new
player attempted to upstage them. Jerzy Steve Bielski, one of Oliver's own
delegates, used Convention to move six resolutions concerning services to
migrants and immigration policy.(2) Bielski had been employed by Dougherty
in June 1951, prior to Oliver's arrival, to assist an Organiser visiting
migrant centres.(3) Bielski had written regular articles in the Worker and
had assisted as an interpreter for migrant members.(4) In the paper he was
described as J.S. Bielski, Organiser and his photograph appeared with the
articles. When Dougherty had employed Bielski he had indicated that he
would be appointed as an Organiser. Although he carried out the work of an
Organiser until February 1958 he had never officially been appointed by the
Executive Council.(5)
Bielski's first resolution at Convention asked for more space in the Worker for articles in foreign languages. This incensed Queensland Branch Secretary, J. Bukowski, who said sufficient space was being given and that migrants were well aware of their rights:

The migrants in Queensland had made State Government Insurance practically bankrupt in compensation claims. Migrants know more about the Awards than the "Britisher" and know more about "going around the back door" to break the Awards than the "Britisher". Why don't they assimilate? They go out and "scab" on Saturday and Sundays, and know they are "scabbing". (6)

Oliver was silent in the debate but Dougherty praised Bielski for the work he had done in answering migrants' letters and helping to assimilate them. He also pointed out that not only New Australians but old Australians broke Awards. On Dougherty's suggestion the matter was referred to the Branch Executives. (7)

Bielski's second resolution concerned the Union approaching the Federal Government to demand better facilities in migrant centres for workers. Oliver seconded an amendment to refer it to the Executive Council. His view was:

...it seemed high time for the Union to give serious consideration to the problem of immigration holding centres. The whole scheme needed overhauling... Mr. Bielski had said he had a very good case,
but there were deplorable, in fact, scandalous conditions for our own people in Australia... There were problems of accommodation in every walk of life... Woolloomooloo for instance - where five or six families are living like ants crawling from all parts of the building.

If migrants are brought out, they must be provided for. Next year there would be a bigger problem to face, as we had been told another 150,000 are coming to Australia. A thousand got off the boat every week, and it was time the Union faced up to the immigration problem. (9)

Oliver's speech was reported in the _Sun_ newspaper whilst Bielski's didn't rate a mention. (10)

When Bielski's third resolution came up that unemployed members be assisted to find work it was again opposed by Bukowski from Queensland and also Dougherty. Both said that the Union always helped members where possible to find employment but the Union could not act in the capacity of a labour exchange. (11)

Oliver did not allow Bielski all the limelight. He made a thoughtful speech about the effect that Menzies' immigration policy was having on unemployment:

106
A peculiar factor about the Immigration Scheme was that the Commonwealth Government decided the policy, decided the quota, but had no plan to employ the migrants. Thousands landed in Sydney every week and became the immediate responsibility of the State Governments, because they were the employing bodies. ...The Commonwealth Government had no right to unload this responsibility on the State Governments.

...the Union should be constructive on this matter. It had an Object that would get the support of all the Trade Union Movement in Australia; and that was that every family in Australia would have sufficient money to live, to buy food and the necessary perquisites of life.

Nobody knew what the migrants were told when they were coming to Australia, but delegates could be certain the picture was not as put to them...It was very difficult to get people to leave their own country if they were doing any good. They did not leave their country because they wanted to, but because they could do better somewhere else. But the picture to-day in Europe was different. Industry was booming...yet we had the iniquitous position of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, with a huge Immigration Scheme spread all over Europe inducing people to come to Australia ...At the same time, the Commonwealth Government could not fully employ the people who were here.(12)
Oliver's opposition to immigrants was based on economic conditions. Unskilled immigrants were competing for jobs against Union members. The Worker reported that unemployment was rising and quoted Albert Monk, A.C.T.U. President, as saying that the figures were disturbing. The paper also reported Mr. R.W.C. Anderson, Director of the Associated Chamber of Manufactures called on the government to ease taxation '...to stop the present unemployment trends'. The rural sector was hard hit with farm income down in terms of purchasing power to its lowest since 1940. All living standards had fallen in 1957-58. All these factors meant Union membership was falling.

Bielski could not match Oliver for oratory or leadership and the delegates carried a resolution congratulating Oliver for the excellent work he had done for members in New South Wales. Mr. W. Brown said of Oliver:

...what we had lacked since 1944, we had got since 1951, and that could be summed up in the one word "leadership".

A leadership which Oliver had no intention of relinquishing to Bielski.

Oliver was quite ruthless and within a month had dismissed Bielski for alleged failure to carry out his instructions. When the Branch Executive met Oliver reported that Bielski had failed to attend an Arbitration Court hearing for increased rates of pay for Pipeliners, although the application had been instigated at Bielski's request. Oliver reported that Bielski, had been very defiant to him in front of the office
staff. In order that natural justice be seen to be done the Executive gave Bielski the opportunity to defend himself against the charges. When Bielski appeared before the Executive he said he was '...not physically and mentally capable of doing so' and produced a Doctor's Certificate and left the meeting.(18)

Nominations had been called between 5 February and 12 March 1958 for all Branch positions in the triennial elections of the Federal Union.(19) Early in February, prior to his dismissal, Bielski and other Organisers had discussed the possibility of working together to contest the ballot. At that time Bielski was considering running as a Vice President.(20) One of the Organisers, W. McDougall, when called before the Branch Executive, stated that Bielski believed he would get great support from migrant members and had expressed dissatisfaction with the Branch Executive as presently formed.(21) After his dismissal, Bielski nominated as a delegate to Convention and opposed Oliver as Secretary. His nomination was accepted in the Returning Officer's report to the Branch Executive on 14 March 1958.(22) Bielski also nominated against Oliver as a Vice President in the ballot for the Executive Council.(23)

In dismissing Bielski, Oliver may have pushed Bielski into challenging him. However, the election was not due until 1 August, to close on 1 December 1958.(24) This gave Bielski time to marshal his forces, but Oliver had a winning card. Oliver believed that under the Union's Constitution Bielski was not eligible to stand for office.(25)
Bielski challenged the Branch Executive in the Commonwealth Industrial Court, expecting that he had rights as a member of the Union to do so. He fought the Executive on the grounds that they had not complied with the Rules concerning the election of delegates to the Labor Council of New South Wales and the State Conference of the Labor Party. (26) In doing this Bielski opened Pandora's box and the issue became whether or not he was eligible, as a member of the Union, to mount the challenge. If he was found not to be a member then it followed that he could not stand for office.

He had played right into Oliver's hands by bringing the matter to the Court. The Returning Officer for the election had already accepted his nomination and Oliver would have had to challenge that ruling in order to eliminate Bielski from the ballot. Oliver may, of course, have been planning to challenge the nomination at Executive Council. As it was Oliver merely had to await the decision of the Court. In the first instance Bielski obtained a rule nisi calling upon Oliver and other Executive members to show cause why an order should not be made under Section 141 of the Act for them to perform and observe the rules of the organisation. (27)

When the case was heard in May and June a curious situation emerged. Although Bielski had carried out the work of an Organiser, had been described by Oliver as an Organiser and had been paid as such, he had not been appointed as an Organiser. In fact a resolution to appoint him as an Organiser had been defeated at a N.S.W. Branch Executive meeting on 26 July 1956. (28)
On 10 June 1958 the rule nisi was discharged by the Full Bench of the Commonwealth Industrial Court. Chief Judge Spicer ruled:

In this matter, in my opinion, the applicant is not and has not at any relevant time been a member of the relevant organisation and for that reason is he is not entitled to the relief which he seeks. (29)

Judge Morgan agreed with the Chief Justice but Judge Dunphy dissented:

I consider the applicant was at all relevant times a member of the Australian Workers' Union and that the respondents, being persons bound to observe and perform the rules of that organisation, have failed to do so in certain respects, though not to the extent alleged by the applicant. (30)

Dunphy had, in fact, granted the original order on 19 May and did not change his opinion as a member of the Full Bench. (31)

The two consenting Judges found that Bielski, who had previously worked at the Government Printing Office, had never been in an occupation which qualified him to be a member of the Union. As well, in order to become an Organiser, Bielski would have had to have had two years prior membership. (32)
The Judges conceded:

...for all practical purposes Bielski has been treated by
officers of the organisation as a member. Indeed, as we find
he has never been a member of the organisation, he has on a
number of occasions been improperly chosen as a delegate of
the organisation to represent it at conferences...it was not
unreasonable that he should institute these proceedings
believing that he was a member of the organisation and
entitled to relief under s.141. Having regard to these
considerations we reached the conclusion that no order
should be allowed for the costs of these proceedings.(33)

The question of Bielski's eligibility as a member may never have come up if
he had not challenged Oliver. Justice Dunphy castigated the evidence of
Oliver and Dougherty. Dunphy concluded:

There is abundant evidence that Bielski was for many years,
treated and regarded by all concerned as a member of the branch...
Bielski swore that in May, 1951, he was told, at a joint meeting
with three officials of the union including Dougherty, the general
secretary that he was to be an "organizer on probation", that
subsequently, on 10th June, 1951, Dougherty told that that "at the
first meeting of the executive council you will be appointed
organizer" and that at some date after 18th July, 1951, Dougherty
told him that he, Bielski, was now an organizer.
Dougherty had given evidence earlier in the proceedings and answered in the negative when asked whether the question of putting Bielski into the position of organizer had arisen before the executive council in 1951 or at any other time. When asked was there any record purporting to show an election or appointment by the union of Bielski as an organizer he answered, "No, none in my office".

These are carefully calculated answers and do not constitute an absolute denial of Bielski's evidence in this regard. ...Dougherty was not asked, and did not anywhere in his evidence state, that Bielski had never been appointed an organizer.(34)

Mr. Justice Dunphy went on to say:

...Oliver said in evidence, "I can truthfully say that I have no knowledge of him (Bielski) being elected or appointed an organizer of New South Wales branch" and upon recall he answered the question "When did you first regard Bielski as an organizer?" by saying, "I never did". In the light of the evidence above referred to I find these statements and answers so incredible as to be suspect of bias. According to Bielski he had clashed fairly violently and more than once with Oliver on a question which is a subject matter of these proceedings, i.e., as to whether delegates to the A.L.P. conference should be appointed by the executive or elected by the rank and file. The latest conflict on this issue was in January, 1958, and
Shortly afterwards by letter dated 22nd February, 1958, and signed by Oliver, Bielski was advised that his employment with the branch was terminated.

...It adds something to the suspicion that Bielski's claim of prejudice arising out of conflict with Oliver is justified. The chronological order of events are, in themselves, significant and made more so when it is remembered that Dougherty openly stated that all manner of persons, including obviously unqualified ones, are freely admitted to union membership. It is difficult in these circumstances, to understand why Bielski, who by reason of his nationality and his gift of tongues, had been responsible for enrolling thousands of new members of the union, was to be forced out of the union unless it was for some ulterior reason. Although Oliver was recalled to the witness box after Bielski's allegations of conflict he did not deny those particular statements.(35)

It is clear that Oliver had everything to gain by the decision of the Court. Oliver had inherited Bielski, when he was appointed Branch Secretary in 1951. Conflict had arisen as early as 1956 when the Branch Executive reprimanded Bielski for misconduct during Oliver's absence on holiday in Western Australia. They had warned that '...any future misconduct will result in his immediate suspension and ultimate dismissal.'(36) There was no explanation in the Minutes as to what the misconduct had been.
Effectively the Court's decision that Bielski was not a member, under the Constitution and Rules of the A.W.U., made him ineligible to stand for office. Bielski's nomination was declared irregular in view of that decision. Oliver was elected unopposed as Branch Secretary. All officers of the Federal Union, including Oliver, were also re-elected unopposed. The uprising had been put down. However, there had been unfavorable publicity which spilled over into the Labor Party when Secretary, Bill Colbourne, was subpoenaed to produce documents relating to A.W.U. Labor Conference delegates.

Although Oliver had overcome the challenge from Bielski by the Court ruling the problem remained that Bielski was still very popular with the migrant members. Before the judgement was given Oliver had charged Bielski in the Court of Petty Sessions with possessing Union stationery. Bielski pleaded not guilty. Despite the Attorney-General ruling there was no bill to answer the case proceeded to the Magistrate's Court. It was during this period that a shot was fired into Bielski's home. Oliver denied that his position was threatened by Bielski and that he had tried to destroy his character. He said he was not afraid of him or a '...paddockful like him'. E.J. Gibson, S.M. dismissed the charges and accepted Bielski's explanation that he had used the stationery to answer letters from New Australian members. These charges must have been distressing for Bielski but did not deter his political ambitions. Ironically Oliver was accused of stealing stationery many years later.
At the June 1938 N.S.W. Labor Conference the big event was Dougherty's success in carrying the delegates for the abolition of the Legislative Council. The Conference was very tense and Campbell, in his Presidential address, told delegates that Conference was not a shooting match and factional interests should be forgotten. (46)

Far from heeding the President's advice factionalism continued as usual. The Officers were well aware of the composition of the delegates and had a list drawn up:

- Pro Officers: Unions 336, SECs 120, total 356
- Anti Officers: Unions 191, SECs 101, total 292

Some delegations may be split – Clothing Trade, Moulders, Builders' Labourers, PKIU. (47)

There were three tickets running for the election of Officers. The Officers' ticket for Vice President was J.C.T. Oliver, E. J.P. Ormonde, J. A.G. Platt. Oliver was number four for Federal Conference. Another called the Centre ticket also had Oliver in the first spot as Vice President and in second place as Federal Conference delegate. (48) The left wing ticket presumably was not favourable to Oliver but it was not filed for posterity.

When the votes were counted J.P. Ormonde beat Oliver as Senior Vice President by 699 to 416, followed by A.G. Platt with 343. (49) This back lash against Oliver was an embarrassment for the Officers. Oliver had been
Senior Vice President since Federal intervention in 1956. In that position he was the heir apparent for the Presidency of the Party. As junior Vice President the succession was not assured.

The Assistant Secretary of the Party at that time, J.A. (Tony) Mulvihill, who won a Senate seat in December 1964, believes the voting was complex because of various factors. Oliver was still seen as being subservient to Dougherty and had to bear the brunt of the anti-A.W.U. vote from both the left and the right. Some delegates from the Australian Railways Union, supporters of the old Ferguson Executive and others who had supported the 'Grouper' Executive, '...sort of felt they’d be a bit difficult and throw their votes around the place.' The Central Executive had also taken their first disciplinary action, against left winger Clive Evatt and Oliver took the brunt of the blame. Ormonde, although fervently anti-grouper, was '...all things to all men' and picked up votes from both sides. (50) There can be little doubt from the events that followed that Oliver was the chosen one.

The events of 1958 show clearly the ruthless side of Oliver's character. He was determined to stay in power and gain more power. Ormonde, who had unwittingly topped the poll for Labor Party Vice President, was within a month elevated to a casual vacancy in the Senate upon the death of Senator Bill Ashley. (51) Obviously Oliver could not have foreseen such an early opportunity but there was a Federal election due and Senator Ashley at seventy two was unlikely to have stood again.
With Cramond removed to the Senate, Oliver as Senior Vice President became Acting President when Campbell was given leave of absence for an overseas visit in September 1958. (52) Oliver was a regular attender at Central Executive meetings during the 1958/59 term missing only one meeting which conflicted with Annual Convention. (53)

At the 1959 Annual Convention Oliver showed the pragmatic side of his character when speaking against a resolution condemning the Japanese-Australian Trade Treaty:

Delegates must agree that without trade this country could not exist, and the Japanese were supporters of our wool-growing. ...delegates should bear this in mind and definitely consider this question knowing that for many years Australia refused to trade with Communist China, which the old masters of diplomacy don't refuse to do. England trades freely with Communist China because the livelihood of England is based on trade, but this country must have markets for its products.

We have had munificent seasons and then we find the problem of disposing of what we produce. If we do not sell to these countries then we can never expect to hold our balance of trade. We have been through periods when we have had adverse balance of trade. The fact remains that we must secure markets for our products so that we see a true return. One of the biggest problems is the loss in our trade in wool. (54)
The Japanese/Australian Trade Agreement was a very contentious issue in 1959 and Oliver could have angered people who had suffered during the Second World War.

During the Convention Oliver paid tribute to Victor Johnson, a former Union President and Cabinet Minister in the Curtin Government. In his tribute he defines leadership:

...those who knew Vic Johnson knew he was made of the material of which great men in the past had been made...As a young man Vic Johnson with his youthful enthusiasm and vigour, threw himself into the fight for better conditions...Those were the days when this Union was being established and knocked into shape...He never had a University education; everything he learned he learned in the hard way. That was a tribute that we had to pay to this man - he never got a start in life; whatever happened he did himself.

It was only natural that men should see him as a leader, because he had the qualities of leadership even as a boy, and as a result he was in the forefront of all the fights...He could fight and he could talk, and he could do all the things that were required to be done to maintain leadership when it was a pretty wild type of thing.
...running parallel with all his Union activities were his political activities...he had the political nous and common sense to see where seats could be won, and he always seemed to be able to pick the right horse for the course...it took a lot of urging to get him to assent (to) endorsement as candidate for the seat of Kalgoorlie.

...In that period of history the fate of Labor as a Government hung in the balance - the fate of Australia hung in the balance...the crisis was arriving because the Japanese fleet was sailing into the Coral Sea...the Brisbane line...was 40 miles north of Perth. Four-fifths of Australia was to be handed over. Johnson was sent to Western Australia; he held meetings in every centre of his vast electorate and he rallied the people to the extent that they were prepared to sacrifice all their interests to the protection of their country...much to the amazement of the other politicians, his prestige and standing in the community rose sky-high, because the people liked the truth and they liked to see the qualities of leadership...he became the Minister for the Interior, because he proved he could look after the job.(55)

Many years later Oliver nominated Johnson as the person whom he most admired.(56)
The most contentious issue at Convention was the move that Executive Council approach other unions to form an Australian Federation of Trade Unions free of Communist influence. This was a direct rebuff to proposals to affiliate with the Australian Council of Trade Unions.\textsuperscript{(57)} Although Dougherty said it was not a matter for the endorsement of the Labor Party the Western Australian Branch of the Labor Party sided with the A.C.T.U.\textsuperscript{(58)}

When Oliver faced the Labor Party Conference in 1959 he was again the target for those who thought the A.W.U. was getting too big for its boots. For the second year in a row Oliver came second in the ballot for Vice President. A.G. Platt of the Transport Workers’ Union headed the poll with 652, trailed by Oliver with 409 and H. Cockerill on 309. Oliver also polled the lowest of the delegates elected to Federal Conference. Campbell was elected unopposed as President.\textsuperscript{(59)} It must be noted that the A.W.U. delegation was the smallest for years owing to reduced membership,\textsuperscript{(60)} although that could not explain the 243 vote difference between Oliver and Platt.

Oliver’s humiliation at the Conference was redressed by a sturdy vote of confidence in him at the Branch’s Annual General Meeting in July:

\begin{quote}
That State Secretary, Mr. Oliver be thanked for the very capable and able manner that he has carried out his duties and assisted the work of this Union both industrially and politically.
\end{quote}
We believe Mr. Oliver, through his sound, sane, tolerant approach was indirectly responsible for the return of the Labour(sic) Government in N.S.W. that has contributed politically to the greatly improved standards of workers in this State. Therefore, the rank and file at this Annual Meeting wish to show our sincere appreciation of the great work achieved by him.\(^{(61)}\)

When the Central Executive met for the first time after Conference Campbell was absent and Oliver took the Chair. Left winger J.D. Garland anxious to stir the pot said he believed Mr. Platt, having received more votes in the ballot for Vice President, was entitled to be the Senior Vice President and be in the Chair. Bill Colbourne, explained that the precedent in similar circumstances in the past was if the Senior Vice President was re-elected that he continue in that position.\(^{(62)}\) Tony Mulvihill admits that this explanation had no basis under the rules of the Party.\(^{(63)}\) The left were not satisfied and Garland and Charlie Fitzgibbon and moved:

```
That Mr. Platt occupy the position of Chairman in the absence of the President, Mr. Campbell, by virtue of the vote at Conference.\(^{(64)}\)
```

The motion was defeated.\(^{(65)}\) Platt was to have been rewarded by pre-selection for a Senate seat in 1960, however, he was unsuccessful.\(^{(66)}\) Mulvihill states that by the 1960 Conference Platt was losing his power within his Union and the Vice Presidency went to J. Bale who was more of a
team player and had a good personal relationship with Oliver.(67)

Oliver still had to contend with Bielski, now Secretary of the New Citizens Council, a migrant organisation, which declared the A.W.U. in New South Wales and Queensland 'black'.(68) An attempt to register the Council as a trade union failed after opposition by the Labor Council. In a final desperate move Bielski tried to register the organisation as a political party.(69) The latter decision gave Oliver the opportunity to have Bielski expelled from the Party.(70)

The new decade brought change. Cahill had died in November 1959 and Heffron inherited the Premiership.(71) Dr. H.V. Evatt resigned the leadership of the Federal Parliamentary Party to become Chief Justice of New South Wales making way for Arthur Calwell and Gough Whitlam to take the leadership and deputy leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party.(72)

It was appropriate that there be a new leader of the Party in New South Wales. However, given the unpredictability of the vote on Conference floor over the last two years Campbell stood again and was elected unopposed.(73) Mulvihill confirms that the Officers' secret fear was that when three tickets were run at Conference there was a danger that something could go wrong. Campbell had agreed to run again and then retire to create a casual vacancy giving Oliver a chance to consolidate himself as President before going to the 1961 Conference for election.(74)
Fred Daly states that Campbell, from the Electrical Trades' Union, had always wanted the position of Chairman of the Electricity Authority and although Cahill had dangled this as a carrot he had never appointed him. (75) Heffron appointed Campbell as Chairman of the Electricity Authority leaving the way clear for Oliver to assume the presidency.

Campbell resigned on 28 October 1960. Oliver took the Chair and called for nominations for the President's position to be dealt with at the next Central Executive meeting. (76) On Anzac Day 1960 with Oliver in the Chair nominations were called for. Charlie Oliver was elected unopposed as President of the Labor Party in New South Wales. (77)

Oliver had achieved this office without Dougherty's patronage. In fact Dougherty had attracted so many enemies over the split and the abolition of the Legislative Council that he had become a liability to Oliver. Tony Mulvihill's assessment of the relationship was that when he first met Oliver in 1952 'he was Dougherty's man but the longer he knew him the more independent he became. (78) John Armitage's view is that Oliver was a fiercely independent, intelligent man, who supported the A.W.U. because it was his first love, but who achieved his political position as President of the Party through his own hard work and intellect. (79) They both agree that by the time Oliver became President of the N.S.W. Labor Party he was beholden to no one.
Chapter 9 - The Commander in Chief.

'To win a battle it is necessary to inspire an army's confidence in its commander.' (1)

While Oliver's election to the Presidency was greeted with interest in New South Wales, overseas events dominated the headlines. John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States and Nikita Khruschev ruled the Soviet Union. The super powers were hell bent on outspending each other in the nuclear arms race and it was the time of Summit Conferences, and of the hope that the fragile world peace would continue. Charlie Oliver began the year with a message to A.W.U. members:

The New Year has opened in a wave of anxiety and trouble. In the midst of strife, Cuba, Congo, and nearer home in Laos and West New Guinea, it is as well to remember that it was the Australian Labor Party which was the first to think in terms of Australian security.

Labor established the Australian Navy 50 years ago. At that time the Liberal and Country Party politicians said we did not need a navy, but we should keep this country safe by "making annual subscriptions to the British Navy".
The "Colonial-mindedness" of the Conservative political parties was responsible for "putting Australia in the soup" in two World Wars, and the position would be little better to-day if we were unfortunately to be involved in another one.

...Labor played a leading part in the establishment of the United Nations Organisation and in the writing of its great Charter as a guide for the free world and as a method of promoting world peace by peaceful negotiation.

Until a few months ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) has scornfully derided the peace aims of the United Nations and paid mere lip service to its ideals and hopes.

...So the New Year has started with Australia's security once more on the front pages. How far will it go? No party has worked harder for international peace than the Australian Labor Party, and no party will work harder for peace than the A.L.P. when it is returned to power in Canberra.

...Our New Year resolution in the A.L.P. is to work for peace and security, and to achieve this we have to be able to run the country from Canberra. (2)
It was to be a feature of Oliver's Presidency that his main interest was in foreign policy. However, his major goal was to make the New South Wales Branch an efficient machine capable of winning seats to gain Federal Government for Labor. By the time he made his first Presidential address to the 1961 State Conference, Australia was suffering a credit squeeze, brought about by Treasurer Holt's policies and unemployment was still rising. Insecurity about the economy and world peace were the major issues in his speech to the delegates:

The immediate and most important task confronting the Party is the winning of the Federal Election...a challenge that we must tackle with all the vigour and tenacity we undoubtedly have. It is the duty of our Party to provide the people of Australia with sound, responsible Government that will remove fear of insecurity from their minds.

In 1942 the Curtin Government declared for a policy of full employment...There is no doubt that the Liberal-Country Party does not believe in full employment. The foundations for full employment were soundly laid by the Curtin and the Chifley Governments with great national development projects, such as the Snowy Mountains Project and Water Conservation Schemes. Agrarian reforms brought about closer settlement and increased productivity. Australia was provided with immense wealth.
Parallel with these developments was the intelligent migration system all of which insured Australia against economic reverse.

Menzies found it difficult to throw this great forward surge into reverse. However, he has now succeeded; the Snowy Mountains project has been slowed down, and is now almost stopped.

People have been prevented from obtaining money to build homes. Roads and other necessary developments are not being built. As workers become unemployed they have little to spend, and are no longer able to provide a market for the products of other workers. Unemployment grows as thousands of workers in affected industries are put out of employment or put on a three(3) or four(4) shifts each week to share the available work.

All are anxious and willing to work, but are forced to exist on the miserable pittance provided for unemployment relief, while Menzies continues to mouth platitudes on the necessity to cut down on expenditure.

...The Labor Party believes in the preservation of World Peace through the United Nations; a Federal Labor Government will work with this aim in mind in meeting the troubled international situation.
The Labor Party stands for political freedom; it rejects theories of revolution and dictatorship, and asserts that these theories have disastrous consequences on the people and do not attain real and lasting benefits. It is a Party of Reform.

We must win and maintain public confidence because without Government Labor is impotent. There is clearly a revival of interest among the people in Labor's policies. This has always been the way when Australia is facing crisis.

Peace is dear to the heart of all decent thinking people. Peace is dear to the heart of all Labor Party members...Real and lasting peace can only be secured on a world wide basis through international organisation. The working people of all countries want peace. The people of Australia want peace and goodwill with all countries.

We covet no other country's land, wealth or people. The Labor Party through Federal Conference has declared the best instruments for peace are for Australia to remain an integral part of the British Commonwealth of Nations as well as the United Nations Organisations and its Agencies.

We must never forget we are dealing with the lives of ordinary people. It is the interest and the welfare of the people that are paramount.
...In a world where the weapons of destruction become more formidable every day, it is our duty to give every possible support to Labor's policy on peace.

...to the legion of men and women who work for Labor and make great sacrifices without hope of recognition or reward. These are the people who make the Labor Party a truly great political force. I am proud to serve it in any capacity. (4)

It was a speech which prompted a resolution praising Oliver for his inspiring address and leadership in his short term of office. (5) The support from the delegates was reflected in the vote for President which Oliver won handsomely by 450 to 234 for J. Heffernan. (6) J.A. (Tony) Mulvihill, then Assistant Secretary of the Labor Party, remembers the 1961 Conference as being important because the delegates saw Oliver in a fresh light, as his own man, free of the encumbrance of Dougherty. (7)

Oliver's speech signalled that Labor's peace policy was not just the prerogative of the left wing of the Party. The N.S.W. Labor Executive was committed enough to print 50,000 dodgers to publicise a Giant Peace Rally at the Sydney Town Hall on 9 September 1962. (8) Oliver chaired the meeting which heard Gough Whitlam, R.J. Heffron and others expound the Party's peace philosophy. (9)
The Party itself still had internal problems which disturbed its peace. The practice of unity tickets, where Labor candidates had their names on a ticket with D.L.P. or Communist Party candidates, was costing Labor electoral support. (10) This problem manifested itself in trade union ballots and Oliver and the N.S.W. Labor Executive vigorously expelled members of the Party, from both factions, who supported the practice. (11) Two prominent right wing Federated Clerks' officials, Betty Spears and Vince Higgins were expelled from the Labor Party in 1961 for having D.L.P. candidates on their how to vote ticket. Twenty nine years later they are still firm in their belief that exchanging preferences with the D.L.P. was preferable to having the F.C.U. fall into the control of the Communist Party. The ticket was headed 'Keep Communist Influence Out of the Union' and their favour has not diminished over the years. (12)

The Coalition used the unity ticket scare to good advantage at the Federal Election in December 1961. (13) Arthur Calwell, leading the Party for the first time, came close to winning Federal Government but Menzies clung to power by one seat, with D.J. Killen winning Moreton by 110 votes after Communist Party and other preferences were distributed. (14) Oliver was re-elected unopposed as A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Secretary in the same month. (15)

In 1962 with all well in the Union Oliver devoted himself to the Party and the next election. In the March State election Heffron increased his majority from 4 to 14. (16) At the June Conference Oliver was elected unopposed as President. (17) The euphoria in the Party regarding the two
election results was reflected in Oliver's address when he said the Party had reached a milestone in its history. However, he was pessimistic enough to stress that the Party needed unity:

The importance of the Trade Unions to the Labor Party is often underestimated. Could there be a Labor Party without the Unions? I say emphatically No!

...It must be made clear that individuals or groups of individuals have not the power to instruct, control or dictate to the Labor Party....the Labor Party attracts and develops strong personalities. People who are forceful when presenting their views; they are the lifeblood of the Party. Tolerance is important...loyalty is a cardinal principle...success in N.S.W. is measured by unity of purpose...The object of political activity is to achieve political power. The Labor Party is a democratic party with roots deep in the working people but to be successful the Party must be seen to represent all sections of the people.(18)

Despite Oliver's optimism that Labor had reached a milestone the pendulum swung back and Menzies won an early election in November 1943. John Armitage, who had won the Federal seat of Mitchell in 1941, lost his seat. In total the Party lost seven seats in New South Wales.(19) The State Executive issued a circular to the faithful:
..the officers do not want to make any precipitate judgment based on first reactions, emotionalism, press statements or personal recriminations. We must face the facts of the situation without fear or favour and without, in any way, conducting a heresy hunt.(20)

The loss of the 1963 election was a bitter blow to Oliver. He was a pragmatist who could not abide the philosophy that purity was better than government. Oliver certainly would not have agreed with former President Jack Ferguson, from the Australian Railways Union, who said in his address to the 1951 State Conference:

Whilst the winning of an election is most important, it is of far greater importance that Labor preserves its principles and identity, as a Party with a policy different and better than its opponents.(21)

Oliver believed that the priority was to win government with policies that were better than the conservatives but did not agree that Labor's identity had to be preserved as it was in the past, looking only to the working class as its source of strength. It is a measure of the man that he could recognise that the Party had to enlarge its base if it was to win government. At the 1964 State Conference, following Labor's Federal defeat, he put his view:
If we examine our electoral prospects in terms of social class, the fact emerges there is a steady process of upgrading of the labour force which makes our society as a whole, less and less working class in outlook...the manual worker as a force in industry is rapidly decreasing...there is a constant increase of white collar workers. In these conditions people tend to acquire a middle class outlook. It is natural for people to want a higher standing in the social scale, and as a consequence the traditional base of the Labor Party is being steadily eroded...We have always worked on the theory perhaps subconsciously that the working class would be subject to more and more exploitation and degradation. This theory is being proved increasingly false. To continue this theory is to deny the undoubted benefits that society in Australia has been given, because of the efforts of Labor Governments and the Labor Party's influence when out of Government.

...Complacency is evil and is always against the essential interests of the people. Our bitterest enemy is inflexibility and obstinacy against change. Not everything that is new is necessarily good, but not everything that has lasted for a long time will go on forever. There are great and exciting tasks ahead of us. We must see the World as it is then we can shape our future with courage, daring and inspiration, with clear intentions and strong will, and with a love of this Country.
Oliver knew that Labor had not won the middle class vote because of its education policy against State aid to church and independent schools. At the N.S.W. State Conference in June 1963, Conference had voted to provide science facilities in all schools. This had been rejected by the Federal Conference in Perth in August which retained the 1957 decision that independent education must be user pay. The only concession had been that the policy would be reviewed by the Federal Executive. Oliver believed it essential for Labor to appeal to a wider electorate, not just those voters whose children went to government schools.

Mulvihill remembers the education debate at the 1963 State Conference and the tactics used by Oliver to keep the debate restrained:

By the early sixties State aid was becoming a problem. Whitlam used the needs basis. Oliver didn’t want Conference to become too heated. There was a Delegate from Ashfield/Burwood S.E.C., a powerful speaker, a school teacher named Walsh. Oliver said ‘If he gets on on State aid it will be the Battle of the Boyne’. So on the first day with the Executive report every time Walsh stood up, Oliver called ‘Brother Walsh’ – he called him four times. When it came to Education and he ran to the microphone Oliver said ‘Sorry Brother you don’t get the call’. Walsh asked when do I get it? Oliver said ‘Yesterday you spoke four times, give someone else a go, sit down.’ Brilliant tactic, he deliberately enticed the bloke on the first day.
Oliver and Mulvihill had consulted the Acting Premier, J.B. Renshaw, and the Attorney-General about the education policy in May 1963. (25) After the Conference decision Mulvihill had set up another meeting with Renshaw "...mindful of the need to examine Conference decision." (26) The Heffron Government intended to introduce State aid for non-government schools in its 1963 budget. However, the Federal Executive intervened and pressured the N.S.W. Executive and Heffron to abide by Party policy. (27)

Another significant factor used against the Party by Menzies had been composition of the Federal Conference which excluded the leader Calwell and Deputy Leader Whitlam. Alan Reid had ridiculed the Labor Party for keeping its leaders waiting outside the Hotel Kingston while the Special Federal Conference had debated the foreign affairs and defence policy, including the issue of the North West Cape installation. Reid coined the phrase 'thirty six faceless men', to describe the Conference Delegates, conceiving Party policy inside the hotel while the leadership waited outside. (29) Oliver admitted this at the 1964 State Conference:

I believe the most damaging issue preceding the December election was the allegation fostered by the opposition of outside control of the Parliamentary Party by the 'thirty six faceless men'. (29)

Oliver, had been a delegate to the Federal Conference since 1956, and was one of the thirty six faceless men. As Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and a member of the Federal Executive he had a crucial
role in determining the policy on the North West Cape installation. Don Dunstan, Junior Vice President of the Federal Executive and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who supported the base with Oliver, had asked for a meeting of the Federal Executive. Arthur Calwell mistrusted Dunstan and called Oliver down to his Martin Place office for a chat to see why Dunstan wanted the meeting. When Oliver arrived he found the room full of people including the Federal President, J. Keeffe, Federal Secretary, F.E. Chamberlain, Senior Vice President, Bill Colbourne and Deputy Leader Gough Whitlam, who had been helping the Foreign Affairs Committee to draft its policy. Dunstan had not been invited.(30)

According to Oliver, Calwell argued with Whitlam. Chamberlain, from Western Australia, wanted a Special Conference to decide the issue. Finally after arguing all day it was agreed that the Federal Executive would meet in the A.W.U. office in Castlereagh Street to carry a resolution for a Special Conference.(31) The Special Conference met in Canberra beginning on Monday 18 March 1963 and finishing on the Thursday.(32)

During the four day Conference Calwell and Whitlam lobbied the delegates to support the Oliver majority report.(33) Committee members Les Haylen and R.W. Holt had presented a minority report against the Base, claiming that it cut across Labor's policy for a nuclear free zone.(34) Oliver recalled that on the first day he thought he had the numbers 24 to 12. However, Calwell and Whitlam kept calling the delegates out under the trees '...seducing them one by one' including Tasmania's Mrs. P.J. Benjamin, MLC, who was reduced to tears.(35) An amendment inspired by Calwell and moved by
C. Jones, which Calwell believed would soften Oliver's majority report, merely confused the delegates and was lost 18 to 18. The other amendment by Chamberlain, opposing the Base, was lost 21 to 15. Oliver's report was finally carried 19 to 17 and a resolution that the matter be recommitted was lost 17 to 19. (36)

Tony Mulvihill was a delegate to the Special Federal Conference and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He gives credit to Oliver for his ability in formulating foreign policy:

Bill Colbourne, unlike other State Secretaries, although a man of great social justice, had no interest in it. Oliver was fantastic, he had no researchers, it was his own assessment of issues. When he went overseas and visited the Middle East he took the view that the Israelis were prepared to get down and till the soil. He related it to the barren areas of Western Australia. (37)

Oliver and his Executive attempted to redress the damage done by the 'thirty six faceless men' tag. Whitlam had put a report to them that the Federal Executive include the Leader, Deputy Leader and five other other members of the Parliamentary Labor Party. Unfortunately that issue also became part of the leadership struggle between Whitlam and Calwell. Calwell opposed the suggestion, because it meant that Whitlam would be on the Federal Executive. To head off the suggestion, with the aid of the A.W.U. Victorian Branch, Calwell won a seat on the Victorian Executive and represented them on the
Federal Executive. (30) At the 1964 N.S.W. State Conference the Executive report recommended that pending alterations to Federal Rules that the Federal Executive invite Federal Leaders to attend all Executive meetings with full rights of discussion. (39)

Oliver's desire to win Federal Government for Labor was made an impossible task with the bitterness between Calwell and Whitlam. Ostensibly he was a widely respected President. He had retained the Presidency in 1963 despite some opposition and in 1964 was re-elected unopposed. (40) In 1964 he was also re-elected unopposed as A.W.U. Secretary. (41) N.S.W. Labor changed leaders with Heffron's retirement and Jack Renshaw taking the helm. (42)

1965 was to be a bad year for the Union and the Labor Party. The vendetta between Dougherty and Clyde Cameron erupted over Cameron's criticism of the Queensland Branch's handling of the Mount Isa dispute. The Annual Convention in 1965 condemned Cameron and Dr. Jim Cairns over statements that they had made in the Brisbane Courier Mail of 22 January relating to a dispute at the Mount Isa mine. Dougherty moved:

That Convention decides that until such time as the Executive Council of the Australian Workers Union is satisfied that the Union is receiving the loyal support from all members of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party to which it is undoubtedly entitled, it withdraws all financial and physical assistance to the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and all Federal Parliamentary Labor Party members. (43)
Dougherty also alleged that Arthur Calwell had approached Edgar Williams A.W.U. President and Queensland Branch Secretary, to assist to remove Dougherty from the Union because the Federal Labor Party had not received financial assistance from the A.W.U. (44)

Oliver showed his undoubted independence of Dougherty by the way he handled this motion. He also displayed ingenuity in speaking against the resolution whilst agreeing with many of Dougherty's points. In opposing the motion Oliver said it needed clarification:

Surely the very essence of this motion was a challenge to this Union; it posed a challenge for this Convention. What he wanted to say was that it was regrettable that a motion of this nature should have to come before Convention; but it did bring very forcefully before us a development that had taken place in Federal Labor affairs that we could say at least was very unhealthy. He wanted to be most cautious in anything he said here about this subject, but what he did say was that unfortunately everything the General Secretary said in his support of the proposition was true; that was the unfortunate part of it.

...He had never accepted the position that a trade union that associated itself with the A.L.P., or an individual who associated himself with the A.L.P., had the liberty to commit
any action that was detrimental to the Labor Party on the
grounds that he did it because his Union had said he had got
to do it. That was the flimsiest of excuses.

...While he remained a member of the A.L.P. he carried out
its policy; if he did not want to do so, he should get out
of the Party. There was no tyranny in that; it was common
sense.

...if this Union withheld its support permanently from the
Labor Party, it would go into decline, and he did not say
that without some support, because any person associated
with Labor in New South Wales in a responsible position
would immediately tell you that for the good health and
welfare of the Labor Party, the A.W.U. must give it
support.

...Pat Mackie probably in a few weeks time would be a joke,
and would be forgotten. However, the effect of the division
that had been fostered by the C.M.C. (Council for Membership
Control) - the scars that their actions would leave, would not
be forgotten. It would take a long time to heal the scars.

...He believed that Mr. Clyde Cameron not only brought the
C.M.C. into life, but inspired every action it took, and he
believed that he arranged the finance for it.
...Everyone in the Federal Labor Party...should declare themselves as to where they stood. They should declare without any equivocation whatever, that they would not support these unwarranted attacks on this Union.

...There was a weakness in the Federal Labor Party, and until it got strength, until it got that quality of leadership that was given to it in the past by men like Curtin and Chifley, it would not rise.

...he was very concerned that the public of Australia should not interpret this motion as an attack on the Labor Party. It was quite positively a threat to the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, and so it should be.

He particularly referred to the State Labor Party in New South Wales. It probably made its mistakes, but he knew of no institution, or organisation, or body of people that had done more to lead the people of Australia to better things that the State Labor Party in New South Wales.(45)

In defining the difference between the Federal and State Labor Parties Oliver was attacking not only Cameron and Cairns but the leader, Arthur Calwell. The C.M.C. (Council for Membership Control), that Oliver spoke of was a group set up by Cameron to contest Union elections. Finally having
spoken against the notion, but agreeing with the sentiments expressed, thereby taking the heat out of the debate, an amendment was put that the matter be referred to Executive Council.(46) The matter did not end and the relationship between the A.W.U. and the Federal Parliamentary Party continued to fester until October 1966 when the Parliamentary Party carried a resolution:

...the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party supports the 1959 and 1963 Federal Conference decisions which set down 'that there should be no interference with the internal affairs of Trade Unions and deplores any such interference.

The meeting, therefore, authorises the Leader of the Party to inform the General Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union immediately that Caucus not only supports those decisions, but will do everything within its power and within the Rules and Constitution of the Australian Labor Party to ensure that the decisions are carried out.(47)

The reconciliation was rewarded by support from the A.W.U. and a cheque for $10,000 for the Federal House of Representatives Campaign in November 1966.(48) Oliver and the N.S.W. Branch had continued to support and finance the N.S.W. Labor Party throughout the period.(49)

However, the rift had spilled over into New South Wales politics when supporters of Cameron set up a candidate against Oliver for the Presidency
of the Party at the 1965 State Conference. Oliver was opposed by a member of the Union, J.W. Ryan, a woolclasser (50) who was at Conference as a delegate from the Eastwood State Electorate Council. Both the "Officers" ticket and the "Combined A.L.P. Unions and Branches" ticket, the left wing faction, supported Oliver as President. He won by 639 votes to J.W. Ryan's 94.(51) Ryan and Les Haylen, M.H.R., representing Dulwich Hill, moved that the credentials of all A.W.U. delegates be rejected. Bill Colbourne moved a point of order that the motion was not in order as the A.W.U. was an affiliated Union. When Oliver upheld the point of order, Ryan moved a dissent from the Chairman's ruling. Conference delegates upheld Oliver's decision not to reject his own Union delegation.(52)

Ryan was to stand against Oliver again in 1966. His vote went from 84 to 112 and as in 1965 the left wing ticket supported Oliver.(53) Despite his failure to influence the delegates to vote for him Ryan was determined to continue to oppose Oliver. He wrote to the Federal Secretary, Cyril Wyndham, making allegations about the A.W.U.'s role in the Mt. Isa dispute and asked the question '..who controls the A.L.P., the A.W.U. or the A.L.P.?' Wyndham passed the letter on to N.S.W. Labor Secretary, Bill Colbourne, who wrote back that he believed that the phrases used in the letter had been used before by others and were not Mr. Ryan's original thoughts.(54) The inference was that he was Clyde Cameron's puppet.

The decision of the majority of the left wing to support Oliver may have been because the Mt. Isa dispute had led to a rebel group deserting its union and setting itself up as a separate organisation. This state of
affairs was not to be encouraged for if it could happen to the A.W.U., it could happen to any union, even a left wing union. The dispute could also have been judged to be part of the continuing battle between Cameron and Dougherty and not the concern of the mainstream left wing.

For Oliver it was the saddest Conference he presided over. Labor had lost the May State election by four seats after twenty four years in power. (55) Oliver’s address was again a warning to those who rejected change:

There is a great temptation not to adapt but to resist modernisation, we like to go on talking the language of 30 years ago. To succeed a political party must take cognizance of the new circumstances...

The thing that matters in politics is power, we have to make ourselves politically acceptable. It is a mistake to continually insist on the doctrinal element in the Party Constitution at the cost of losing electoral support... a political party must provide good government for all people. The social trends are too strongly against a class Party. I repeat what I said at the last Conference. There is a steady upgrading of the labour force with a constant increase in the White Collar group. There is a tendency to acquire a middle class outlook among the younger people. This we cannot ignore.

145
...There is no room in the Labor Party for people who place self interest before the interest of the people as a whole. Our minds must be firmly fixed on the all important task of creating Labor Governments to advance the great causes that have been entrusted to us. (56)

The loss of government in New South Wales was a double blow to Oliver. In his dual roles as Union Secretary and a Labor Party official he had enjoyed an open line to three Labor Premiers, Cahill, Heffron and Renshaw. Mulvihill verifies this and states that Oliver and other Officials of the Party met regularly with the Premier of the day. (57)

Undoubtedly Oliver had a unique opportunity to influence Labor policy to benefit his Union membership. One such policy area was sand mining, which was a very contentious issue. The A.W.U. covered workers in the industry. Oliver and the Officers met Acting Premier Renshaw to discuss the matter. (58) Mulvihill, as Assistant Secretary of the Party wrote to Oliver that there was:

...intense interest on the question of the Kurnell development of sand deposits. Councillor Russell, Sutherland Shire Council (delegate to conference from Cronulla S.E.C.), Organiser Quinn from the T.W.U. and the National Parks Committee are to confer with the Lands Minister. Mindful of your own interest in this matter I made preliminary enquiries of Land Minister who informed me that nothing would happen
until late August, when we will receive a report from the District Surveyor. I am informing the T.W.U., Cronulla S.E.C., and Sutherland Shire Council, asking them to give the Committee background to this issue. Upon receipt the National Parks Committee (Messrs. Wallace, Healey and myself) should have a long discussion with you to determine whether we should at that stage have consultation with the parties regarding the above, as a prelude to the subsequent interview with the Minister.

While I imagine we have an obligation to individual affiliated unions and S.E.C.'s to express their views to the Minister, it will be essential that the Party Officers and Committee know in advance just what these views are and how they can be kept within the ambit of Party policy.

Under the circumstances you will be kept advised of subsequent developments and the nature of the submissions received from these persons.(59)

When questioned about this letter Tony Mulvihill's memory of events was that Sutherland Council and Arthur Gietzelt, who was then moving up in the Party, didn't want sand mining at Kurnell. The Party Officers endeavoured to keep a balance between Labor's traditional blue collar worker supporters and the environmentalists. They did this by promising to monitor sand mining projects. However, Mulvihill said rehabilitation of some beaches wasn't good and there was one project at Gosford where the company was told by
Charlie Oliver that they had to do better. Mulvihill's memory is accurate. The National Parks Committee report on rutile mining advised:

That the Minister for Local Government be advised of the support of the State executive for any appropriate action that can be taken promptly to provide a fair balance between mineral development and safeguards of the people's national parks and coastline.

Mulvihill states that Oliver was conscious of the need to conserve the environment and that he only had one argument with him where Oliver had been inclined to put his Union's needs first. That was the issue of Colong Caves at Barrington Tops. As the A.W.U. covered cement workers Charlie had said it was necessary to continue mining or it would 'bugger up the members'. However, Mulvihill was able to demonstrate that there were other available deposits and Oliver gave way and the caves were saved.

With Labor's defeat in 1965 Oliver had to face the fact that his linkage to power, in New South Wales, was severed. In August Oliver sought leave of absence from the Union and the Party to travel overseas. The tour, sponsored by the American Government's educational and cultural exchange programme, was to look at mechanisation in agriculture and methods of settling industrial disputes. After the new world, he returned to his roots in the old world, visiting Britain, Sweden, Greece and Israel. It appears to have been the only time that Oliver returned to the land of his birth.
The Commander-in-Chief of New South Wales Labor never fully recovered from Labor’s defeat. 1965 was a landmark year for Oliver; it was to be the half way mark of his Presidency and it was the beginning of the end of his charmed run. From then on he is under attack within the Party and in the Union.
Chapter 10 - Changing times.

'For, as I have said, a man who is used to acting in one way never
changes; he must come to ruin when the times, in changing, no
longer are in harmony with his ways.'(1)

When Oliver returned from overseas in 1966 his State power lines were down.
Change was in the air. By Australia Day the country had a new Prime
Minister as Harold Holt inherited Menzies Government.(2) The A.W.U.,
formerly a bastion of isolationism, began the process of affiliating with
the Australian Council of Trade Unions. In July 1966 the Executive
Council recommended affiliation and Doughtery explained the new philosophy:

A great and welcome change has come over the Australian
Council of Trade Unions since the last A.C.T.U. Congress.
That is why we are now prepared to join the A.C.T.U.

Leaders of the A.C.T.U. have reduced the influence and
strength of the Communists to negligible proportions. We
are consequently anxious to keep it that way.
Another factor that has influenced us has been the value of the A.C.T.U. to the trade union movement through the extraordinary ability of the A.C.T.U. industrial advocate, Mr. R. Hawke, in the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

...Back in the 1920's the A.W.U. had the vision of creating one big union. What the Executive Council has done is to foster this vision within the A.C.T.U.

When we join the A.C.T.U., we will be closer to one big union movement in Australia than at any other period in our history. If that happens, the entire trade union movement will be in one organisation. Such a development must result in great benefits for the working class and their families and also for the nation.(3)

The N.S.W. Branch Executive supported the recommendation unanimously.(4) When the Annual Convention met in 1967 and confirmed the affiliation Oliver seconded a vote of thanks to Albert Monk and Albert Souter, President and Secretary of the A.C.T.U., who had addressed the Convention. Oliver recognised:

It is an event of some importance, that at last we are embraced by the whole of the Trade Union Movement of Australia. I feel it is like coming home.
What you say is true, and what Tom Dougherty has said today is true, that there is no place for parochialism or isolationism in this country, or in the world today. For good or for ill, we are part of a huge human family. We all have that herd instinct...if we are in trouble we get together.

...How important it is today we have a strong Trade Union Movement, a united body of people that can be a force, particularly when we are fighting politically. It is more important than ever to be strong industrially and united industrially, because by those means we will become strong politically.

...We have accomplished something here today; we have given the Trade Union Movement the strength it needs, and we will give the political movement the strength it needs.

The Labor Party certainly needed strength. The Party was at its lowest ebb, having lost twelve seats in the November 1966 Federal election, leaving it only one third of the seats in the lower house. Three of the lost seats were in New South Wales. Holt had fought election on Australia's responsibility to the American alliance and the issue of conscription for service in Vietnam. The coalition had its greatest win since 1949.
The subject of the alliance and conscription was a hotly debated at the Annual Convention in January 1967. A resolution demanding the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam and the total disengagement of Australian troops was moved and was followed by an amendment that conscripts be withdrawn from Vietnam. Oliver rose to support the amendment. Unlike his usual logical speeches his argument lacked cohesion. Although he had said he was supporting the amendment by the time he finished speaking he said that neither the motion nor the amendment should be supported.

Now rightly or wrongly, America was committed in Vietnam. America, whether we believed it or liked to think otherwise, was the most powerful nation on earth. She was not going to walk out of Vietnam, not for anyone.

...America was not going to walk out, but she wanted a truce to discuss the terms of peace. That was the position in the Second World War. Do not forget that when you were strong you did not walk out.

A.L.P. policy said that the American alliance was crucial to Australia.

...Now we come to the question of conscription. The policy of the Australian Labor Party insofar as defence is concerned
implies conscription, and as far as our own defence goes, we had conscription during the whole years of the Chifley Government following the war.

That position was repealed by the Menzies Government. Don't forget that. If we had been in Government we would have had at least 50,000 to 60,000 trained troops available at any time. That was our policy and still is.

You come to a position quite different when you talk about conscription for overseas service. We have never been committed to that, and refuse to be committed to that.

...Now you come to the question of Vietnam. It has never been an issue discussed by any A.L.P. Conference at which I have attended in recent years. It was never Party policy or made Party policy. It is a lot of useless yackity-yak.

How did we get involved in this argument on Vietnam apart from the merits of troops going there? Mr. Holt invited us to take him on on Vietnam, and our leader did take him on on Vietnam and your great social programme of progress was forgotten. You got the results and you got slaughtered.
...You are completely misled when you are told that it is the policy of the Labor Party to do all these things about Vietnam. The policy was never made.

It is a lot of yakkity-yak at meetings - everybody making policy and everybody saying something. You got the results; you got the biggest thrashing politically that you ever had in Australia.

Don't be misled by these motions. I am quite sympathetic; I believe it is quite wrong to bomb any people.

But what are you going to do when people who want freedom and people who love freedom need your help to defend themselves? Why have people got to be communised; why have they got to accept that form of life?

I was in Israel last year, and if you are in Israel you can be anything, and they are all happy together.

I say you should carry neither the amendment nor the resolution. The whole lot of it should be defeated, because you are being informed improperly of the facts of the case. (B)

It was not one of Oliver's best speeches and may reflect that although Oliver was still Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of the Party he no longer had any real influence on foreign policy. His view
was that the Vietnam issue had not been determined by Federal Conference, and just because Arthur Calwell had made it part of his election strategy that the troops should be withdrawn from Vietnam, that did not make it the Party's policy. The issue had been further complicated when Whitlam supported only withdrawal of the conscripts and not the regular army, which added to the bitterness between the leadership. (9) For Charlie 'yakkity-yak' wasn't policy making.

Oliver blamed Calwell and the left for the election debacle. Within a week of the poll Oliver had chaired a meeting of all New South Wales Federal and State politicians, together with the N.S.W. Officers and N.S.W. Federal Conference delegates. Fred Daly was one of six apologies. (10) Whitlam and Renshaw moved a resolution paying tribute to Calwell but it was left to Colbourne and Mulvihill to sink the knife into the Leader:

That this meeting of Federal Labor Parliamentarians, State Labor Leaders, Executive Officers and N.S.W. delegates to Federal Conference, recommends in the best interest of the Party that the Federal Labor Caucus meet early in February 1967 for the purpose of holding ballots for the election of Federal Parliamentary Labor Leaders and other ballots for the election of the Caucus Executive and Official positions. That this meeting is of the opinion that it is imperative that the Federal Labor Leaders be elected as early as possible to give them sufficient time to meet and prepare tactics and proposals for the new Parliament and to discuss such proposals with Caucus. (11)
An amendment from Tom Uren that the meeting welcomed Calwell's proposal that the Caucus meet in the first week of February was withdrawn after Tony Luchetti moved an addendum that the meeting would welcome any suggestion by Calwell for an earlier Caucus. The addendum and the motion was carried unanimously.(12)

When the Caucus met E.G. (Gough) Whitlam was elected Leader with Lance Barnard as his Deputy.(13) Colbourne and Oliver had promised their support to Fred Daly for the Deputy Leader’s position if he agreed not to contest the leadership. Daly states they were afraid that if he ran and split the vote that Jim Cairns would get the leadership. However, Whitlam told Daly that he was backing Barnard and would not follow Colbourne and Oliver’s wishes.(14) It was beginning to be obvious that the old leaders of the N.S.W. Party no longer could expect their edicts to be followed.

The subject of Oliver's age, he was then sixty-six, had come up at Convention. Dougherty had recommended that Convention should select as its nominee on the A.C.T.U.:

> not only be a qualified and competent man, but that he should be a comparatively young man...(15)

This, of course, ruled out not only himself but Oliver. His suggestion was Edgar Williams, Queensland Branch Secretary and President of the Union. The South Australians delegates, who may have been just trying to stir the
possum, nominated Oliver. Delegate Cameron, a brother of Clyde, said he did not agree with Dougherty that you could not have an old man. He did not believe that either Dougherty or Oliver were old men and that:

...he had always been very impressed by Mr. Oliver's contribution to Convention, and he felt that the occasions he had travelled, and the contribution he had put into the Labor Movement, and the fact that he was President of the A.L.P. in his State, and on the Federal Executive, made him a good nominee and that he could represent this Union very capably. (16)

Oliver, whilst thanking the South Australians for the honour they did him, declined the nomination. Dougherty denied that he had intended any disrespect to his old ally. (17)

At sixty six Oliver was still a formidable man who followed the philosophy that in order to keep power you eliminated would be rivals before they had the opportunity to do any damage. In order to safeguard his power base whilst he was overseas Oliver installed a trusted Organiser Reg Mawbey, now a Commissioner in the N.S.W. Industrial Court, to safeguard his kingdom against a possible pretender for the election due in 1967. Another Organiser, Lew McKay, who thought he was the favoured son and heir was denied the opportunity to run the Union's affairs in Oliver's absence. This created tension between Mawbey and McKay. (18) On his return Oliver bided his time before deciding whether McKay was a serious rival and needed to be eliminated.
In April 1967 Oliver transferred McKay from his Port Kembla power base to Sydney to work directly under his supervision. Whether he had, at this stage, decided to dismiss McKay is not known. Possibly he was merely keeping a tighter rein on him in case he decided to bolt. McKay organised his forces to write to Dougherty and Edgar Williams, A.W.U. President, protesting the transfer. He did not personally protest to Oliver. The Branch Executive discussed the matter at their June meeting.

The Executive had been informed by Oliver of his transfer of McKay in April. In view of the protest letters Oliver reported to the Executive on the reasons for the transfer:

In all the years, Mr. McKay's directions have come mostly from this Executive. He is the only organiser that has been called before this Executive in my experience. He has been here on three occasions. He is the only organiser I have written to who has rejected what I have told him or challenged my right to tell him anything, and who completely ignored my letters. He is the only organiser who ever attempted to set himself up as a separate part of the Union. He is the only organiser in the whole of my experience that has refused to accept the normal procedure associated with the administration of this part of the Union. He is obviously a person who does not fit into a team. He wants to act as an individual.
...We have had a lot of difficulties at Port Kembla, but you can expect difficulties because it is an industrial area and they have all sorts of reasons for taking exception to the conditions of employment. It is the right of the member to express himself, but the difficulties have always in my view, been magnified by Mr. McKay, and I am certain in my own mind that any real problem that occurred at Port Kembla during Mr. McKay's period of employment in that area was never settled. It was always kept at boiling point until the Court intervened.(21)

Oliver chronicled a long history of disputes that had festered in McKay's area, the worst problem being at Australian Fertilizers:

In two years there had been 215 disputes holding up production at Australian Fertilizers, (we were the direct cause of 94.) Then I was told over the phone that a Section 100 was going to be taken against us. We have had that done to us before, but we have always had a good defence. They could not previously claim that we had not conducted ourselves responsibly, and they have never been able to prove a Section 100 against us. In this case we had no defence, and I came to the conclusion that this Section 100 would go through and we would have to pay. The Section 100 was served on us by a very reluctant employer at about 5.30 p.m.

...I received a telephone call early one morning from Mr. Ramsay, President of the South Coast Trades and Labour Council. He told
me that all the people employed at Australian Fertilizers were anarchists...I also arranged for Organiser Mawbey to travel to Wollongong to attend the meeting. Mr. Mawbey's report is available on what occurred...The only person who appeared dissatisfied with the motion that was moved for a "return to work"...was Mr. McKay.(22)

After examining other aspects of McKay's work the Executive called him in to receive 'natural justice'. The cross examination that occurred caused McKay to react angrily:

I suffered one Moscow Trial in 1961, and I am not going to place another on record for anyone to read...I want the Executive Council to deal with this, that is if the Executive Council have the guts to deal with it at all.(23)

With that McKay '...walked out in high dudgeon and slammed the door hard on the Executive at 2.25 p.m.'(24) Oliver assured the Executive:

I have done nothing to McKay. I have been his friend. It is obvious that McKay resents me...(25)

and with that declaration the meeting closed.

The Branch Executive met again on 26 June 1967 to hear the Returning Officer's report of nominations for the Branch election. McKay had not
challenged him and Oliver was elected unopposed as Secretary. McKay chose to stand as a Vice President. The subject of McKay's employment was thoroughly discussed by the Executive. On the second day they terminated his employment, before they heard an impassioned plea from Mr. H.S. Townsend, representing a committee of local delegates, who called for McKay's return to the South Coast.

Townsend brought with him a tape recorder which Oliver quipped was a bit of '...russofication'. When asked by Oliver what the committee would do if the Executive did not agree to their demands, Townsend said:

We will fight you for the rest of your life, certainly there will be a lot of unrest. The only ones you will get as members are those forced to hold a ticket, other members have indicated they intend to leave the Union and join other Unions.

Send us back McKay and we will be one big happy family.

The Executive had no intention of doing that, but no one told Townsend that the decision had already been made to sack McKay.

Whilst Oliver was busy shoring up his defences in the Union, he had to fend off attacks within the Labor Party. Mr. F. Carr, Secretary of the Wangi Wangi Branch of the A.L.P., wrote to Senator J. Keeffe, Federal President of the Party, complaining about the delay in choosing Senate candidates in New South Wales. Carr alleged:
...that the State Executive will be discriminating against sitting senators in favour of a group which can only be called Right Wing Reactionaries... (30)

Carr also wrote in his capacity as Secretary of Robertson Federal Electorate Council asking that the Federal Executive intervene in the pre-selection of Senate candidates in New South Wales. The reason he gave for writing to the Federal Executive was that the N.S.W. Officers did nothing with correspondence and:

We strongly suspect that these resolutions are never placed anywhere except the rubbish box. (31)

The Federal Executive resolved to ask the N.S.W. Labor Executive for a report, which they provided. (32)

Oliver retaliated in public during his President's Address to the June N.S.W. Conference by replying to allegations made by the Wangi Branch and others:

This miserable assault, on a body of people who have always conducted themselves with the dignity and integrity that their responsibility in the Party requires of them, should be rejected with all the scorn and contempt that can be heaped upon it. (33)
It is said that the best form of defence is attack and Oliver castigated the Federal Executive. He drew the delegates attention for the need for reform of the Federal Executive that continued to exclude the Leader of the Party from its structure. He blamed the Federal Executive for rejecting a proposal from Cyril Wyndham, the Federal Secretary, for widening the representation on the Executive and leaving the decision to a Special Federal Conference in August. (34)

Oliver was opposed as President by the Secretary of the Hairdressers' Union, J.S.W. Scully, who snipped more off Oliver's majority than Ryan had in the two previous years, scoring 278 to Oliver's 465. (35) Ryan, ran against Colbourne for the Secretary's position and managed seven votes. The ticket for Scully was headed 'How to Vote for a radical change in Labor's leadership against a second Liberal Party.' (36)

The resulting publicity from the public brawl saw the Newcastle Morning Herald report that Oliver did nothing for unity and that the Party lacked '...a dynamic quality needed to regain public support at elections' and that the State Executive were indulging in a witch hunt. (37) On the question of a group working to depose sitting Senators Lionel Murphy and Doug McIelland, the Sunday Telegraph alleged the conspirators included John Armitage, the Assistant Secretary of the Party, John Ducker, a Vice President, Senator Tony Mulvihill and Lord Mayor John Armstrong. (38) Armitage confirms that he was organising the numbers for the Senate pre-selection to safeguard his friend, sitting Senator Joe Fitzgerald, who
was to head the ticket. In the end, much to Oliver and Colbourne’s
cornernation Armitage organised so well that Lionel Murphy only scraped in
by one vote. (39)

When the Wangi Branch, which had suddenly become the focus of press
attention, complained to Bill Colbourne that the President had unfairly
attacked their branch, Oliver replied to Colbourne:

It is a known fact that the Branch had launched an attack on
Party officers and Executive through the Federal President
to the Federal Executive...

As President I have a duty to protect officers and members of
Executive from unfounded charges...based on malice. (40)

Whether it was a President’s duty to respond publicly against the charges,
or not, Oliver’s over reaction in lashing out at Party members, shows a man
under stress.

In dismissing McKay, Oliver had acted in the same way that he had with
Bielski, years earlier, when he sensed that there was a pretender for the
throne. Only this time McKay was an elected Organiser, under the Rules of
the Union, and could not be put down as easily as Bielski had been.
Immediately after being dismissed McKay had taken an action in the
Commonwealth Industrial Court challenging the right of the Branch Executive,
under the Rules, to dismiss him. The case hinged on Rule 64, the power of
dismissal. Justices Joske, J. and Kerr, J., found the Branch Executive did not have the right. Chief Justice Spicer, C.J. dissented. McKay was awarded a majority decision that:

...the said Branch executive, being the respondents herein, and each of them (a) to proceed no further upon the said resolutions or decisions of the said Branch Executive and (b) to recognise, treat and accept the Claimant as still being an elected organiser of the said Branch of the Union.(41)

However, the Judgement made it clear that the Branch Secretary had the right to dismiss an Organiser. McKay’s legal advisers, seeing the weakness in the case, advised him to challenge the rules.(42)

During the interim the Union controlled ballot, in which Oliver was elected unopposed continued. McKay lodged an application for an inquiry by the Commonwealth Industrial Court into the ballot in October 1967, some weeks before the ballot closed. The Industrial Registrar granted the application.(43)

At sixty six, when most men have retired, Oliver was still controlling the Union and the Labor Party in New South Wales. However, the young turks of the Party were hungry for government and power and his enemies in the Union were active. Although Oliver still had power it would not be for much longer. The hounds were baying and about to close in for the kill.

166
dismissal. Justices Joske, J. and Kerr, J., found the Branch Executive did not have the right. Chief Justice Spicer, C.J. dissented. McKay was awarded a majority decision that:

...the said Branch executive, being the respondents herein, and each of them (a) to proceed no further upon the said resolutions or decisions of the said Branch Executive and (b) to recognise, treat and accept the Claimant as still being an elected organiser of the said Branch of the Union.\(^{(41)}\)

However, the Judgement made it clear that the Branch Secretary had the right to dismiss an Organiser. McKay's legal advisers, seeing the weakness in the case, advised him to challenge the rules.\(^{(42)}\)

During the interim the Union controlled ballot, in which Oliver was elected unopposed continued. McKay lodged an application for an inquiry by the Commonwealth Industrial Court into the ballot in October 1967, some weeks before the ballot closed. The Industrial Registrar granted the application.\(^{(43)}\)

At sixty six, when most men have retired, Oliver was still controlling the Union and the Labor Party in New South Wales. However, the young turks of the Party were hungry for government and power and his enemies in the Union were active. Although Oliver still had power it would not be for much longer. The hounds were baying and about to close in for the kill.
Chapter 11 - Extraordinary Forces.

'...if such a prince is of ordinary ability, he will always maintain his state, unless some extraordinary and inordinate force deprive him of it and although it may be taken away from him, he will regain it with the slightest mistake of the usurper.'(1)

Oliver began 1968 with a series of Court actions penceing against the Union. Firstly, McKay had challenged the Branch elections, even before they had closed. Secondly, although McKay had been reinstated by the Court, he realised that Oliver would eventually dismiss him, as the Judgement had confirmed the Branch Secretary's right of dismissal. McKay, consequently, had no choice but to challenge the rules regarding dismissal.(2)

In the meantime McKay rallied his forces in an attempt to rattle Oliver. Intent on showing their strength, they had taken over the January Half Yearly Meeting of the Branch and rejected the Returning Officer's report of the election. They had also directed Oliver not to take further action against McKay.(3) As well allegations were made against two Organisers regarding their conduct in the ballot.(4) McKay himself was curiously absent. His supporters tendered an apology from him with the explanation that he was suffering from nervous hypertension and would be unfit for work.
for some time. (5) His condition had not been helped when Oliver dismissed
him in December, shortly after his reinstatement. Although he had the right
of appeal to the Executive, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. (6)

In May the challenges regarding the rules were dismissed in the Commonwealth
Industrial Court by the unanimous decision of the Full Bench. (7) However,
the case concerning the ballot was causing grave concern. The newly elected
Branch Executive were not due to take office until July, and at the last
meeting of the old Executive, Oliver said goodbye to two Executive members
who had not sought re-election:

I never like changes of administration in the Union unless it
is brought about by members inability to carry on...You must
have noticed there is not the same mateship in the Union there
has been over the past years. This Union will only survive in
its present form while the people who administer it stand
together. We have seen the progress made over the years, because
we stuck to each other. You cannot all win positions, there is(sic)
not many prizes, there is only one Branch Secretary position, only
one.

You all have the right to compete for the position, but you have
members of the Union also running in Ballots who could destroy
the Union. Almost all of my life has been spent in looking after
the Union... I am sorry to see anyone go from here, this Executive
will not be the same. (8)

168
This lament reflects Oliver's passionate commitment to the Union but also his inability to accept that anyone else should run the Branch.

The meeting also decided to hold the July Annual General Meeting in Newcastle. (9) If this move was designed to allow the Oliver supporters a majority at the meeting, it did not succeed. One hundred and three members attended the meeting, compared to seventy six at the January meeting. (10) McKay supporters were already in the upstairs rooms, in the Newcastle office, when Oliver arrived. They had stationed a doorman to check those entering the meeting. Oliver quite unperturbed shook hands with the burly doorkeeper until the man winced in pain. It was his only moment of triumph all day. (11)

During the rowdy meeting seventeen members left after the Port Kembla members arrived and "..normal business became impracticable". (12) This time McKay had recovered from his hypertension and was on the attack. The dissidents moved that his legal costs be paid. Their main focus concerned agenda items for Convention to change rules regarding election and control of organisers. Another grievance was the election of delegates to Labor Council and Labor Party Conferences. (13)

There is little doubt that the dissidents were being led by left wing elements who sought to gain control of the Union for political motives. The
A.W.U., with one of the largest delegations to the Labor Party Conference, was the key to breaking the stranglehold the right wing had on New South Wales Labor.

McKay supporters, in the Labor Party on the South Coast, had condemned Oliver for dismissing him. They protested to Bill Colbourne '...that these most undemocratic actions...' should not infiltrate the Party. Colbourne replied that the Party did not interfere in the domestic affairs of its affiliated unions.(14) Other dissidents from the Figtree Branch sent an agenda item for Conference complaining to the Labor Party Executive:

...that the 1967 State Conference failed to do anything for the Party...most ordinary delegates felt most dissatisfied and there was a strong opinion that the Conference and Party policy making machinery needed to be completely re-organised.(15)

The left wing used the concept of reform of N.S.W. Labor to focus their attack at the June Party Conference. In an amendment to the Executive Report R. Gietzelt from the Miscellaneous Workers' Union and T. Uren from Merrylands S.E.C. moved:

...Conference expresses its concern at the deterioration of our elected Executive to give effective leadership in the affairs of the N.S.W. Branch...we suffer from the want of a positive balanced and representative leadership essential if we are to unite all sections of the Party in N.S.W. and so provide the means of returning Labor Governments to State and National Parliaments.(16)
The amendment was lost and the uprising put down.

Oliver's continuing problem within the A.W.U. was an embarrassment for the faction. Bob Carr, who joined the Young Labor movement in 1968, has been quoted as recalling meetings at Cahills where Laurie Brerston and Paul Keating, then the young turks of the right, discussed:

...how John Ducker had to take over the State A.L.P. leadership because he was the only one who could rejuvenate the right wing machine. (17)

The succession to the Party leadership was confirmed at the 1968 Conference with the election of John Ducker as Senior Vice President. (18) A position he had achieved in April following the resignation of Jim Coulthart through ill health. (19)

In his Presidential address to the delegates Oliver showed he was still in charge and said:

...that the pulse and temper of an organisation was measured at Conference. A Conference is a time for stocktaking, for exploration of new ideas, for planning, for inspiration and for renewal of faith...the Party had lost its second successive State election after governing for 25 years. It was almost 19 years since Labor governed the Commonwealth.
...Unions had given birth to the Labor Party and had nourished it in its early years but were now indifferent parents in this affluent age. If Unions are to continue their claim to be the basis of the Labor Party they must accept greater responsibility to gain the undoubted benefits that accrue from Labor Government.

...We are waging political warfare and election campaigns on shoe-string budgets of much less than half of what we were spending in 1949. Politics is concerned with winning elections, in order to have political power. Parties opposed to Labor have a proper understanding of this basic fact. They will use any subterfuge, misrepresentation or unscrupulous means to gain Government and retain Government. The Labor Party must understand this. Politics in Australia is a type of warfare in which no holds are barred.(20)

It was a successful Conference for the right. Oliver was again opposed by J.W. Ryan, who was more of a nuisance than a threat, gaining only 152 votes to Oliver’s vote of 591.(21) However, he was a nuisance that Oliver could do without. Ryan had asked the Union for a record of his membership, which they provided, and also requested a copy of the Union’s Audited accounts. In return the Branch Executive resolved:

That the person known as Jack Ryan who claims the occupation of Woolclasser, and who has purchased Union tickets, particulars
of which are herewith given...be required to produce evidence satisfactory that he was at the time of receiving his ticket and has continued to be entitled to become and remain a member of the Union.(22)

Ryan was unable to satisfy the rather biased A.W.U. Executive and by August 1968 they declared that he had '...ceased to be a member...'(23)

During this period Oliver was under severe stress. John Armitage, then Assistant Secretary of the Labor Party, remembers visiting Oliver at his office. Charlie greeted him with the words '...Jack I've had a kick'.(24) Armitage believed that Oliver had suffered a small heart attack and was told that Oliver refused to take his pills which were being administered to him in his coffee by a concerned staff member. Armitage suggested he go on holiday but Oliver said it was impossible. As a compromise to ease the stress, Armitage suggested that Ducker take the chair at Executive meetings and Oliver only look after Federal Executive business.(25) This was done for a few months.

Oliver wasn’t the only one feeling the strain. After two election defeats Jack Renshaw resigned as Leader of the State Parliamentary Party in July. He called Oliver and Armitage, who was Acting Secretary whilst Colbourne was on leave, over to his office and told them he was about to resign to the Caucus. Armitage remembers he and Oliver discussing Renshaw’s health and both of them expressing the same fear that Renshaw had cancer. Pat Hills, a close friend of Oliver’s was elected as Leader of the State Parliamentary
Party. Armitage is emphatic that to his knowledge the N.S.W. Officers never interfered in Caucus decisions, apart from the meeting held to force Calwell into an early spill.(26)

There is no indication that Oliver was ready to resign either the Presidency of the Party or his Union position. However, the long Court action alleging irregularities began to take its toll as the day to day running of the Union became more difficult due to Court appearances and the necessity to provide Union records. By August Oliver had decided on his course of action.

Oliver told the Executive that most of the charges had been ruled out by the Court but that McKay and his legal people were raising matters outside the original complaint. The Judge had told him that the case could last for two years. He recommended that the initiative be taken away from the McKay forces by taking the matter to the members in a fresh ballot.(27)

Consequently the Executive resolved to request Executive Council to change the rules to allow a fresh ballot for the contested positions for the remaining period of the term of office and that the Industrial Registrar make arrangements for a new election.(28) Subsequently the Executive Council changed the rule and McKay agreed to withdraw his actions. Justice Kerr commented:

…it seems to me to be eminently sensible, as a means of avoiding the great expenditure of money and effort that would be involved in litigating the issues, through to finality for the parties to have approached the matter in the way they have.(29)
Whatever motivated Oliver to recommend that course of action he was not at risk as he had been elected unopposed in 1967 and was not to be part of the new ballot.

Although McKay had withdrawn his Court action he attempted to disrupt the annual election for Convention delegates without success. However, he had control of the Half Yearly Meeting of the Union on 26 January when he called for a Special General Meeting to discuss the annual accounts. McKay admitted that he had contacted Clyde Cameron regarding the allegations of irregularities in the ballot, in which, he said, bundles of papers had been filled in by one person. Oliver pointed out that the Court had found no evidence to support that and 'we don't have to listen to this rot'. One of McKay's men interjected that they paid Oliver's wages and directed him to sit and listen.

It is a measure of the stress that Oliver was under that he lost his temper and told the McKay supporter that if he paid his wages '...he could shove the job up the fundamental orifice..' In the resulting uproar the Chairman adjourned the meeting and Oliver and his Executive walked out. Terry Murphy, who was an Executive member and present at the meeting, concedes that this was a tactical error which created more bad publicity for the Union.

Despite the meeting being adjourned the dissidents remained and carried a resolution that they had no confidence in the Branch Executive for walking
out. They also condemned Oliver for his vulgarity and called for a public apology. As well the McKay forces used the Caringbah Branch of the Labor Party to write to the State Secretary asking for support of their condemnation resolution. (34)

At the 1987 Convention McKay received no support. The delegates voted unanimously to adopt Oliver's report and balance sheet. (35) Convention had then to ratify the special rule allowing a fresh election. Oliver in addressing the delegates defended himself against slanderous allegations made in Federal Parliament by Clyde Cameron, regarding the challenges to the ballot. Oliver assured the delegates that nothing had been proved and the only reason for the special rule was to stop the nonsense. (36) A new election Oliver said would be won by his team but he added:

...I know this is impossible, but if we did not win, what a tragedy it would be for this part of the Union; when you see the forces arrayed against us, you would know what would be the end result of that. This is a Branch of the Union that in some 17 years has pulled itself up from a debit balance-sheet that shows a consistent profit; it is a balance-sheet that shows an increase in members. Yet we have been criticised and even told that the balance sheet is "crook"... (37)

Convention carried a resolution that Executive Council call a meeting to discuss disaffiliation with the Labor Party if the Federal Parliamentary Party failed to censure Cameron for his allegations. (38) The threat was reported in the press. (39)
Oliver had received support from the N.S.W. Labor Party Executive who called for an enquiry by the Federal Executive into Cameron's actions. Consequently Colbourne received many letters from Branches criticising the Labor Executive. (40) One letter from the Padstow Branch summed up the situation:

The Branch does not agree with the resolution regarding Clyde Cameron's statements and disassociates itself from that decision. In submitting this motion there was a strong feeling in our Branch that for too long now, prominent Party officials have used our Party to carry on past vendettas or pursue fresh ones, all to the detriment of our movement, both internally and externally. (41)

In replying to Mrs. Bonser, Coulbourne said:

There is no doubt that Mr. Cameron's action was deliberately designed to make the attack under the privilege of Parliament and for the purpose of having his speech reprinted as an extract of Hansard.... and no action can be taken against him. (42)

The Federal Executive, which included Oliver and Colbourne, met and tried to smooth things over by calling on all parties to honour the 1963 Conference decision that there be no interference in the internal affairs of trade unions. (43)
There is no doubt that Oliver was under siege in both his kingdoms. To add to his problems his faithful friend and ally Bill Colbourne, who had been Party Secretary since November 1954 (44) retired on 28 April 1969. (45) The Central Executive appointed Cyril Wyndham as General Secretary from the same day. (46)

To add to Oliver’s problems Wyndham, who had previously been Federal Secretary, was asked to appear before the Federal Executive to answer certain allegations. John Armitage, then Assistant Secretary, recalls Wyndham coming to his office and saying ‘I am not going to be questioned by that mob of incompetent bastards’ and refusing to attend the meeting. (47) When Oliver and Colbourne attended the meeting the Federal Executive instructed Wyndham to appear, but they could not reach him by telephone. Armitage managed to speak to him at the Zebra Motel but Wyndham would not promise to appear. The next day Armitage tried again but Wyndham had left the motel. On checking with the airlines Armitage found that no passenger of that name had flown to Canberra that day. (48) Upon Oliver’s return he had no alternative but to dismiss Wyndham. (49)

Colbourne agreed to act in a temporary capacity until Conference. Armitage remembers there was a mad panic about whether the Officers could hold Conference, which he did not share as he had organised the numbers. The Officers held a meeting to discuss Wyndham’s replacement. John Ducker, wanted Peter Westerway and he was supported by Colbourne. Although Armitage aired his doubts about the suitability of Westerway, Oliver stood with Colbourne as he had done since their pact many years before. (50)

178
Westerway, was the perfect choice for a new image. He had a 1st class Honours Economics Degree, had been a university lecturer and Director of Channel 7 Public Affairs. (51) He was seen as a man who could outsmart the left, who had continued with their campaign to oust the right wing from the Officers’ positions. Part of the campaign was a leaflet circulated in May calling for a new Central Executive:

...election of new Central Executive essential. It has been dominated far too long by group of machine men who are responsible for Labor’s decline in New South Wales. These men must go if Labor is again to govern in State and Federal Parliament....N.S.W. A.L.P. extreme right wing recognised as inflexible reactionary group...Central Executive is rubber stamp for machine. (52)

At the Conference Oliver was again opposed by Ryan, who received 24 votes, with the main left wing opponent Mr. Cameron gaining 134. Oliver was still miles ahead with 598. (53) Westerway was also successful. An analysis, probably done by Armitage, of the Officers’ expected support at Conference lists:

Unions 25, Branches 12, Women’s Conference delegates 4,
Youth Council delegates 1, University 2, Country 5,
Broken Hill 1. (54)
The Conference, despite the panic, was well under control, although the size of the A.W.U. delegation was questioned. Oliver had written to the State Executive for clarification of the Union's affiliation and had appeared before the Credentials Committee in April to explain the organisation of the Union and to present an audited membership statement. Ray Gietzelt tried his annual amendment to the Executive report regarding their failure to give effective leadership, but to no avail.

Throughout this period various Court battles continued to bring bad publicity to the Union. A successful challenge regarding four out of five nominations mounted by Organiser Roy Mawbey, in the Commonwealth Industrial Court, delayed the start of the ballot. That was followed by another challenge. The Court rejected that challenge by N. Friend but ruled that the ballot must be conducted entirely by the Commonwealth Electoral Officer. All positions were to be contested except that of Branch Secretary. Oliver had been elected Branch Secretary unopposed in 1967 for five years so that position was not to be included in the new ballot.

One week later Oliver and the Branch Executive went to Dubbo to open the new building named 'Oliver House'. The Executive had previously decided to hold the Annual General Meeting in Dubbo and this time they had the numbers, which was evident when the McKay forces lost the first dissent motion. McKay's men were not prepared to travel to the bush.

Whether this change in fortune lulled Oliver into a sense of false security or whether it was because he was not at risk, he did not take the
forthcoming ballot seriously. Fergus Lake warned him that there was an organisation working against him. Oliver's reply was 'Show me where it is.' He did not believe that McKay had sufficient support to win. For a man who had warned the Labor Party in 1964 that:

Complacency is evil and is always against the essential interests of the people...not everything that has lasted for a long time will go on forever..." (62)

he did not heed his own advice. The Oliver team were ill prepared and when the results were announced McKay and his team had won all the major positions, except two places on the Executive. (63) The impossible had happened. Oliver was a captive of a hostile Executive.

Oliver was still Branch Secretary (he had been unopposed in the 1967 ballot) but George Duncan, the President, and Fergus Lake, the Vice President were out of office. Seven Branch Organisers, including Reg Mawbey, were also defeated. Only four of Oliver's Organisers, including Ernie Ecob and Fergus Lake were elected but on the crucial Executive he only had two supporters. (64)

The first meeting of the new Executive took place on 2 October 1969 with Syd Barnes as President and Lew McKay as Vice President. The tone of the meeting began with McKay requesting that the meeting be taped. (65) That was followed by a resolution of no confidence in Oliver calling on him to resign within seven days. With great dignity Oliver replied:
I take it this motion is for me to consider. I will consider this proposition I will not run out. I will let you know in seven days, I will let you know.(66)

To add to his indignity Oliver was to present to the Branch President all books and records and the cheque books and was to make no press statement.(67) John Quilkey, one of the two Oliver supporters, questioned whether '...we were still in Australia when we restrict the freedom of the press.'(68) As well Oliver had the humiliation of having to telephone John Ducker to tell him that the delegates to Labor Council had been dismissed.(69) The fate of the defeated Organisers was discussed. A jubilant McKay was to be returned to his faithful South Coast supporters.(70)

From the moment of the defeat Oliver and his Organisers vowed to win back the Branch and created a committee, made up of the Oliver team and supporters, as its organising tool.(71) Oliver, who had no intention of resigning drew on his reservoir of years of strength to '...stand as firmly as the Rock of Gibraltar'.(72) The Action Committee, as it was to become known, had their first win for the election for Convention delegates, also run by the Electoral Office.(73) The old team was back in business. Although the election had been under the control of the Electoral Office, McKay obtained a legal opinion to see if he could overturn the ballot and found that it would be impossible.(74)
Despite directions not to speak to the press Oliver gained favourable publicity in the Worker by attending country meetings where he was treated with respect and support. (75) A furious McKay ordered Oliver to have 5,000 copies of the October Executive Minutes printed and sent to delegates. (76)

Standing apart from the turmoil, still secure in his citadel of power, and in control of the Federal Union and its journal, the Worker, General Secretary Tom Dougherty, gave his old ally much needed support. McKay had issued a document to members indicating that Oliver was only Secretary through a legal technicality. An irate Dougherty wrote to Oliver that he had been legally elected as Secretary in 1967 and stating McKay should substantiate his statement to the Executive Council. (77)

The McKay team, had been elected by campaigning as the 'Better Dealers', espousing as their creed fairness and honesty. Their first step at their January 1970 Executive meeting was to dismiss Oliver as Branch Secretary. They charged him with neglect of duty and tabled a ten page report chronicling alleged misbehaviour. (78) They directed him to hand over all the keys and leave the building. (79) Oliver's reaction was to inform them that they would need a Court order to get them and that he regarded:

this as a dastardly attack on myself and a destructive attack on the members of the Union...I don't intend to hand anything over to you at all. You people are a conspiracy and I will expose you for what you are at the proper place...I would not comply with anything you tell me to do and you should have enough brains 

183
if you have any at all, to know that. I will now allow you
people to come into this place until my name is cleared. You
get the police to remove me.(80)

John Guilkey and Edgar Allen voted against the dismissal, with Guilkey
saying 'If this was Moscow you couldn't have done a better job of trying to
set a man up.'(81)

The battle was taken to the Annual Convention held in Queensland. The McKay
Executive resolution, that the N.S.W delegates had not been elected properly
and should not be seated, was defeated.(82) A telegram was also received,
from the N.S.W. Branch Executive, that McKay had been appointed Branch
Secretary.(83) Oliver had already submitted an appeal to the President and
Convention against his dismissal.(84)

The long standing relationship between Dougherty and Oliver, which has been
described by many as 'love-hate', was still strong. The prince would not
allow his ally to be struck down by their mutual enemies. Dougherty moved:

...that the N.S.W. Branch Executive...did not conform with
Rules of the Union nor did they act according to natural
justice...that the A.W.U. Convention further decides that
Mr. C.T. Oliver shall immediately resume the office of
N.S.W. Branch Secretary...Convention instructs the N.S.W.
Branch Executive...to recognise Mr. C.T.Oliver as Secretary
of the N.S.W. Branch of the Union.(85)

184
The motion was carried 31 in favour 3 against. Oliver abstained from voting. A further successful resolution gave Executive Council the task of investigating the allegations and ensuring that the N.S.W. Branch Executive conformed with the instruction to recognise Oliver.

When the Executive Council met, McKay and Lean the elected N.S.W. Councillors, did not appear. They sent in their place Syd Barnes, the President and Vice President L.J. Hogan. By then Oliver had taken out an injunction against the Branch Executive to stop distribution of the allegations pertaining to his dismissal. When questioned as to whether the N.S.W. Branch Executive had received the telegram instructing them to recognise Oliver as Secretary, Barnes said it had been received but had not been discussed at their meeting. The Executive Council determined that the two elected delegates should be instructed to appear and that Mr. Barnes and Mr. Hogan should not be admitted to the meeting.

McKay and his Executive continued to ignore the Executive Council. As soon as Oliver returned to Sydney he attended the Half Yearly meeting of members. The meeting was held at Trades Hall and was not disturbed as none of the McKay group turned up. The meeting resolved support in Oliver and the Convention decision and called on the Executive Council to note the continued defiance of McKay and his Executive to recognise Oliver.

Throughout February various actions and counter actions were heard in the Commonwealth Industrial Court. Oliver's old rival for the Labor Presidency,
Jack Ryan, charged him with theft, following an incident outside the Court when Oliver took a paper from his hand. Magistrate W. Lewer dismissed the charge as utterly trivial with the comment that Judges should not be used to settle private fights. (92)

On 11 May 1970 the Full Bench of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission unanimously found that Oliver was Branch Secretary and that he had been illegally dismissed and that the Branch Executive should recognise his position. (93) Costs were found for Oliver. (94) When Oliver returned to the A.W.U. office he found the large Executive room, where he had always worked, locked. Fergus Lake remembers him breaking the lock by putting his shoulder to the door. (95) Oliver then began dismissing the McKay organisers. (96) This incensed the McKay Executive who, despite the Court decision, met on 13 May, and called upon Oliver to show cause why he should not be dismissed. They gave him until 20 May to answer the same charges they had levelled at him in January. (97)

By this time the strain was affecting Executive member, David Owen, who scribbled his resignation to the Executive. (98) The move to dismiss Oliver was opposed by Edgar Allen and John Quilkey. Quilkey who had to travel from Coonamble for each meeting expressed his disgust:

I would like to record this is a bloody waste of time it has been gone over and over again. I have seven kids to support and I have to run back here every fortnight since this business has been handled in the Court, it will finish up there again. (99)
In fact the matter ended up again with the Executive Council. Oliver reported to them that during the period he had been denied access to the office and that chaos had reigned. Staff had been harassed (resulting in the Clerks’ Union gaining a reinstatement), insurance premiums and subscriptions to the Federal Union had not been paid, large legal bills had been run up, revenue was down and correspondence not answered. (100)

Oliver had been brought from the West to rescue a Branch in disarray and now it was in a similar situation. Dougherty and the Executive Council resolved to dismiss the McKay Executive and take over the affairs of the Branch with Dougherty and Oliver as a committee of management. (101) The grand alliance was in charge again as they had been in 1951.

The events that followed took on the semblance of a French farce. The McKay rebels took Union records, opened a new bank account and set up an office in George Street. The Executive Council directed members that the Union office was still at 229 Castlereagh Street and all monies should be sent there. They then appointed a new Branch Executive comprised of Oliver’s supporters. (102) In need of funds the Better Dealers printed their own tickets and so members were warned not to buy counterfeit tickets. (103) They attempted to send their delegation to Labor Council but the Council delegates unanimously supported the Oliver delegation. (104)

Despite all the strain Oliver carried on with his duties as President of the N.S.W. Labor Party. Outside the Sydney Town Hall demonstrators carried
placards reading 'Come in and see Oliver Twist'. The bad publicity during the year about the Oliver/McKay battle and the demonstrations marred the new look image the right were trying to portray with General Secretary, Peter Westerway, and Assistant Secretary, Geoff Cahill, who had replaced John Armitage when he was returned to Parliament at the 1969 Federal election. At the time Cahill was appointed there had been rumours that Kerry Sibraa would have liked the job but that he had been too outspoken. Ducker wanted Cahill, who worked for him as Compensation Officer at the Labor Council.

Oliver already knew that this would be his last Conference as it had been decided that first Colbourne, then Armitage and finally Oliver would hand over the reigns to the young turks. As President he had the joy of seeing Conference reject a delegation from the McKay forces and seeing his own delegation credentialled, winning the vote 416 to 294. The right wing still had majority support. Oliver's President's Address is clearly a farewell:

In the years that I have served our Party...I have always been fortified by the friendships so freely given to me by Party members. And I have always found strength in the wealth of ability and experience which is the Party's greatest asset.

...We enter a new year with hope tempered by the knowledge that we are still faced with difficulties...the shifting pattern of economic and political circumstances...the spreading
scope of industrial unrest...the crisis in agriculture...
pollution of the whole human environment...inflation...an
unfair taxation system...unfair health services...growing
problem of drug addiction...a shortage of housing for both
young and old...a crying need for national superannuation...

All of these problems require original thought, imagination and
courage...We live in a period of the most rapid change in the
history of man. We have to equip ourselves and our people to
meet the change. Happily the Labor Party is a party of change
and we are geared for it. The political tide is flowing strongly
for us...Australian people are looking to us for leadership and
guidance in coping with the issues, internal and external, that
confront the nation. (109)

In a wide ranging speech Oliver spoke of international relations and
conflicts and said 'The way of reason is the path of peace. The bullet's
path leads only to war'. On social welfare he said 'the Party must build
on the great foundations of social welfare for which, in the past half
century, it has been primarily responsible.' He paid particular attention to
economic policy:

It is false and hypocritical to attribute inflationary
tendencies to increased wages justly obtained by workers,
when record company profits and rising price levels of
all commodities demonstrate that wage increases are
passed on to the consumers - the very people who have just obtained the wage rises.

An intelligent, radical approach is demanded to ensure that employers' cost and price schedules are subjected to the same strict scrutiny that is required before workers' wage claims are granted. One source of inflationary pressure is the uncontrolled gambling in stocks and shares, operations which create millions in paper assets, often out of holes in the ground, and divert finance urgently needed for development into the pockets of unproductive parasites.

...Delegates I have enjoyed my years as your President because they have been such full years... I look to the future with pride. I look to it with high hopes. We have a great new generation of young Labor men and women coming up. One day the students will be writing their doctorate theses and passing judgement on all of us - on you, as well as me.

...Good luck to them... But one thing they will have to give us - give me: give all the rest of you delegates here - we did have a go... And they will certainly have to say one other thing. In New South Wales, we have kept the Party together. I said before that "Unite" must be our watchword... We are building the strongest Party in Australia without turning our backs on the past. We can have both change and stability.
...The stage is now set for a quiet revolution in New South Wales. We are going to have a Party which will be the most modern and efficient Australia has ever seen. And we have still stayed true to our traditions.

Delegates, it has been a great past, and it will be a great future. I am proud to have been part of them both. I thank you all for allowing me to have played my part.

When the Executive report was given Ray Gietzelt from the Miscellaneous Workers' Union made allegations against Peter Westerway, but there was no outcry and the report was carried.

Prior to Conference there had been press reports that Federal parliamentary members, from both sides of the factional fence, had wanted to discuss with the Officers reform of the New South Wales Branch but that the Officers would not meet with them. In October allegations concerning pre-selection ballots and bias on the part of the Conference Chairman were the subject of a report prepared by Federal President Tom Burns. The report suggested that complete restructuring was necessary.

In November Oliver, who was approaching his sixty ninth birthday, abdicated the Presidency in favour of John Ducker. In later years Oliver was to say he did not agree with the re-organisation but he went quietly because he had to concentrate on the continuing battle in the Union. John
Armitage confirms that Oliver chose his own time and that although Ducker wanted the Presidency he did not push Oliver. Mulvihill believes that the move for reform was such that it was inevitable and that Whitlam was impatient to have reforms made before the next election.

Oliver’s Presidency lasted ten years. His speech to Conference shows his intellect was as sharp as ever. When he left the leadership he had not accomplished what he set out to do – to achieve a Federal Labor government and a return of the New South Wales Labor Party to the treasury benches. He had, however, brought the Party through one of its most difficult periods and left it in a better state than he had found it.

In January 1971 the Oliver team won the election for Convention delegates. Early in 1971 the Commonwealth Industrial Court found that the Executive Council comprised too many delegates from Queensland when it had made the decision to sack the McKay Executive and the Court reinstated them. On 6 February 1971 the McKay Executive regained control and declared that ‘...all meetings held since 13 May 1970 null and void’. They dismissed all Oliver’s organisers and reinstated their own. Oliver was directed to show all correspondence to Vice President Lew McKay, who would assist him in the day to day duties of the Union. The only bright spot for Oliver was the election of Reg Mawbey to replace David Owens. He now had three allies on the Executive.

Throughout the year Oliver presented a stoic figure as he endured indignities. The McKay Executive denied him the use of a personal secretary
(123) and authorised McKay to sign correspondence with Oliver. (124) Both
men sat at either end of the long Executive table. Oliver totally ignored
McKay and continued with his work as best he could. (125) Meanwhile the
Oliver Action Committee was active in the country attending pastoral
meetings and gathering support. All the Oliver team worked hard and were
again successful as Convention delegates in 1972. (126)

During 1971 and 1972 McKay and his Executive managed the affairs of the
Branch with disastrous results. By September 1972 they were in deficit to
the amount of $77,000. (127) When the Commonwealth Electoral Office, which
had conducted a ballot for all positions, declared the results on 29
December 1972, the Oliver team had won back the kingdom and the usurpers
were routed. (128)

For over two decades Oliver and Dougherty had shared one passion, the return
of Labor to Federal Government. Dougherty did not live to see Labor win on
2 December nor Oliver’s victory over McKay. Tom Dougherty died suddenly in
November 1972. (129) The Worker spoke for the Union:

His sudden death closes an era of A.W.U. history, which
under his guidance, is unsurpassed for progress. He stands
in no man’s shadow. (130)
Oliver was to continue as A.W.U. Branch Secretary and then State President until he retired in 1985, aged eighty four. Although he was still active at Labor Conferences for most of that time he never regained his political pre-eminence.

Charlie Oliver died on 24th February 1990. At his funeral great political figures and workers came to pay their last respects. John Armitage gave the eulogy:

He was a big man, big in intellect and in compassion. A man who gave his life for others. We shall not see his like again.(131)
Conclusion.

Charlie Oliver had two great loves - the Australian Workers' Union and the Australian Labor Party. His passion was shared by Tom Dougherty, whose patronage gave Oliver the opportunity to amass considerable power.

Originally Oliver had owed his position in the Union and the Party to Dougherty. Later the relationship between the two men changed as Oliver came out of the shadow of his prince. It was Oliver who first saw the inherent dangers of the 'groupers' and warned Dougherty. Although Dougherty, with his more florid aggressive style, took the general's role in the battle, it was Oliver who provided the ammunition and the back up. During this period, whilst Dougherty attacked and made many enemies, Oliver with his more conciliatory approach gained the respect of Party members and trade unionists. This enabled him to gain the Presidency of the N.S.W. Branch of the Labor Party in 1960.

After the split Oliver worked constructively to rebuild the Party, unlike the bombastic Dougherty who set out on a collision course which ultimately led to more destruction. Although Oliver was aware of the dangers in Dougherty's obsession to abolish the Legislative Council he supported him. Loyalty was a cardinal principle practised by Oliver. However, John Armitage recalls that Oliver knew that Dougherty's obsession would bring problems to the Party.

195
This loyalty was evident again when Dougherty's feud with Cameron resulted in the withholding of financial and other support from the Federal parliamentarians. Although Oliver publicly supported Dougherty he made sure that the New South Wales Labor Party was protected and continued to provide financial assistance.

Oliver and Dougherty shared a ruthless quality when it came to eliminating their enemies. This can be seen when Oliver dismissed Bielski who had ambitions for the leadership of the Union. When McKay became ambitious Oliver used the same tactics. Unfortunately McKay, unlike Bielski, had the constitutional right to run for office in the Union and was more determined and better organised.

However, Oliver, through good fortune had not been opposed in the 1967 ballot and when McKay forced another election in 1969 Oliver's position was not at risk. Despite being a captive of a hostile Executive, Oliver's strength of character enabled him to survive humiliation and regain his kingdom. During this difficult time Dougherty repaid Oliver's loyalty by reinstating him and his Executive and it was only a Court decision which gave McKay the upper hand until the next election when Oliver's team swept him out of office.
Oliver's position within the Party gave him access to three Premiers and whilst Labor was in government in New South Wales he was able to influence Party policy, especially on sand mining. However, Mulvihill testifies that Oliver was willing to make concessions for the environmentalists on the issue of the Colong Caves. Unlike Dougherty, Oliver never used his Union strength to threaten the Labor Party.

During the years of his Presidency of the State Labor Party Oliver's driving ambition was for Labor to win Federal Government. His pragmatic view of foreign policy, and the State aid issue for funding of non-government schools, was based on his belief that the Party's policies must be broadened in order to provide for the needs of the middle class voters as well as its traditional working class base. Oliver's support for Whitlam as Party leader, against the more traditional Arthur Calwell, is a further indication that he recognised the need for a new image.

Oliver's greatest love was the Australian Workers' Union and although he devoted himself to the Party he never sought political office. He was not ambitious for political office, which is proved by the fact that he had resigned his parliamentary seat to come to New South Wales to rescue the ailing Union branch. There is no doubt that he enjoyed his political role and used it, on occasions for the benefit of the Union membership. However, he saw the Party and the Union as one and when there was conflict worked towards a compromise.
A man of undoubted ability Oliver's greatest character flaw was that he believed he alone could run the Union and the Party, a fault which led to complacency. His failure to recognise that McKay was a formidable enemy, who would not be eliminated as easily as Bielski, led to the loss of his Union power base and made him expendable as President of the Party.

Oliver was fifty years of age when he came to New South Wales and he was seventy one when he regained control of the Union. The years after 1972 have not been discussed in this thesis but they too show a man unwilling to give up power.
Chapter 1 - Fortune.


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


11. Rayworth, op.cit.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid., p.136.


199


Chapter 2 - The Prince.


8. Hope, *op.cit.*


Chapter 3 - The Arrival.


2. Worker, 8 August 1951, p.10.


6. Worker, 8 August 1951, p.10.


8. Ibid., 14 November 1951, p.10 and 21 November 1951, p.10.


10. Ibid., 8 August 1951, p.10.


12. Ibid., 13 March 1952, p.3.


14. Worker, 26 March 1952, p.11.


17. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


32. Circular 52/57, *op.cit*.

33. Circular 52/69, 4 April 1952, *op.cit*.


Chapter 4 - Early warning.


4. Ibid., pp. 2, 3 and 5.


17. M. Dodkin - Interview with T.J. Murphy, A.W.U. Executive committee and former organiser and D. Young, organiser, 10 May 1989.

18. Raxworthy, op.cit.


27. Raxworthy, op.cit.


29. Ibid.

30. Raxworthy, op.cit.

31. Ibid.


33. Raxworthy, op.cit.

34. S. McHugh, The Snowy The People Behind the Power, William Heinemann Australia, 1989, p.155.(This chapter was written prior to publication of this book and was subsequently amended).


36. Taylor Judgement, op.cit., p.11.

37. McHugh, op.cit., p.151.

38. Ibid., p.166.

Chapter 5 - Pious citizens.


4. Ibid., p.509.


11. Ibid.


15. Raxworthy, op.cit.


17. Ibid.

18. Raxworthy, op.cit.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.


23. Ibid.


26. B.A. Santamaria, Against the Tide, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.140.


28. A. Reid, Sun, 13 April 1954, p.32.


30. Rayworth, op.cit.

31. Murray, op.cit., p.140.

32. Circular 54/197, ML MSS.2083/449, op.cit.

33. Worker, 9 March 1955, p.8

34. J. Lang, 'Why groupers capitulated to A.W.U. - Dougherty coup', in Century, 10 June 1954, p.3.


36. Ibid.


38. Ibid., p.10.


40. Ibid., p.510.


42. Worker, 6 October 1954, p.3.

43. Murray, op.cit., p.179.

44. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 3 November 1954, p.1.
47. Ibid., 9 March 1955, pp.8-9.
50. Circular 54/337, Box ML MSS.2083/449, op.cit.
52. Circular 54/357, Box ML MSS.2083/449, op.cit.
54. Circular 54/358, op.cit.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Rexworthy tapes, op.cit.
59. Circular 54/359, op.cit.
60. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Sydney Morning Herald, 6 December 1954, p.4.
64. Worker, 15 December 1954, p.6.
65. Ibid., 29 December 1954, p.6.
68. Ibid., p.12.
69. Ibid., 9 March 1955, pp.7-10.
70. Ibid., p.12.
71. Ibid., p.10.
72. Ibid., 9 February 1955, p.5.
74. Murray, op.cit., p.229.
77. Circular 55/96(Amended), ML MSS. 2083/364, op.cit.
81. M. Dodkin - Interview with Fred Daly, 28 November 1989.
82. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Sun, 4 May 1955, p.13.
89 Ibid., 21 September 1955, p.7.
90. Ibid., 8 February 1956, p.1.
91. Ibid., p.4.
92. Ibid., 9 March 1955, p.10.
94. The Voice of the Rank and File, August 1961, p.3.

96. Worker, 4 April 1956, p.1.


98. Ibid., 14 March 1956, p.7.


100. Rayworthy tapes, op.cit.


102. Santamaria, op.cit., p.201.

103. Circular 56/196, Box ML MSS. 2083/450, op.cit.

Chapter 6 - Traditional enemies.


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 16 November 1955, p.8.


8. Ibid., 22 February 1956, p.10.


10. Ibid., 7 March 1956, p.1.


13. Ibid., 7 March 1956, p.8

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 14 March 1956, p.6

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 4 April 1956, p.6.

18. Ibid.


211


26. Ibid., 18 April 1956, p.3.


29. Ibid., 23 May 1956, p.6.

30. Ibid., 2 May 1956, p.8.

31. Ibid.


33. M. Dodkin - Interview with Ernie Ecob, A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Secretary, 8 December 1989.

34. Ibid., (Ernie Ecob, and other shearers without work, had to feed their family, on occasions, with stray sheep. The men resented Oliver’s remarks and Ernie Ecob said they ‘hunted him out of Coonamble.’)

35. Worker, 16 May 1956, p.1.

36. Ibid.


40. Worker, 23 May 1956, p.6.


42. Letter from C.T.Oliver to Hon. J.J. Cahill, Premier, 26 June 1956, A.W.U. files.


44. Worker, 16 May 1956, p.1.

45. Ibid., 8 February 1956, p.8.
46. Ibid., 23 January 1957, p.6.
47. Ibid., 27 June 1956, p.1.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 11 July 1956, p.1.
50. Ibid., p.12.
51. Dodkin, op.cit.
52. Letter from J. King to L. Mead, 9 April 1956, A.W.U. files.
55. Worker, 2 May 1956, p.12.
56. Letter and report from L. Mead to C.T. Oliver, 10 April 1956, A.W.U. files.
57. Letter from C. O'Dea to C.T. Oliver, 10 May 1956, A.W.U. files.
58. Ibid.
60. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 13 July 1956, p.4.
64. Letter from L. Mead to C. Newton, 5 August 1956.
65. Pro forma letter from C.T. Oliver, undated, A.W.U. files.
66. Letter from J. Wiltshire to C.T. Oliver, 2 July 1956, A.W.U. files.
70. Letter from C.T. Oliver to J. Wiltshire, 12 October 1956, A.W.U. files.
71. M. Dodkin - Interview with M. O'Shea, Vice President A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch, 8 December 1989.


73. Worker, 6 February 1957, p.10
Chapter 7 - A Dangerous Crusade.


2. Worker, 6 February 1957, p.7.

3. Ibid.


5. Worker, 6 February 1957, p.7.


8. Ibid., p.2.


11. Worker, 6 February 1957, p.5.

12. Ibid.


15. Ibid., 26 January 1957, p.4.

16. Ibid.


18. Letter from W.R. Colbourne to C.T. Oliver re Officers' meeting, 7 February 1957, Box ML MSS.2083/17, op.cit.


20. Letter from W.R. Colbourne to C.T. Oliver re appointment with Presier, 8 February 1957, Box ML MSS.2083/17, op.cit.


22. Circular 57/73, op.cit.


28. Ibid.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 26 June 1957, p.3.

34. Circular 57/131, Box ML MSS. 2083/451, *op.cit.*


40. Ibid.

41. Reference Librarian, New South Wales Parliament (personal communication).

42. Circular 57/181 Credentials Committee Report, Box ML MSS. 2083/451, *op.cit.*

43. M. Dodkin, Tape - Interview with John Armitage, 26 February 1990.

44. Letter from J.A. Mulvihill to T.W.M. O'Rourke, Box ML MSS.2083/17, *op.cit.*

46. Circular 58/92, Box ML MSS.2083/452, op.cit.

47. Sydney Morning Herald, 22 March 1958, p.5.


51. W.R. Colbourne to T.N.P. Dougherty, 18 April 1959, Box ML MSS.2083/368, op.cit.


66. Rawson, op.cit.

67. Worker, 13 April 1960, pp. 1 & 8. (Two more Labor members had
defected.)


69. Ibid., p.5.

70. *Worker*, 10 May 1961, p.3.

71. Ibid., p.1.

Chapter 8 - The Leader.


2. Worker, 5 March 1958, pp.6, 7 & 8.


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid., pp.6-7.

8. Ibid., p.7.

9. Ibid.


11. Ibid., p.10.


16. Ibid., p.11.


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 25 January 1958, p.3.

20. Ibid., 14 March 1958, p.4.

21. Ibid., p.5.

22. Ibid., p.2.
27. Ibid., p.259.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p.261.
32. Ibid., p.263.
33. Ibid., p.266.
34. Ibid., pp. 267-268.
35. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
37. Ibid., 12 June 1958, p.2.
38. Ibid., 16 January 1959, p.5.
44. Ibid., 5 December 1958, p.5.
46. A.L.P. Conference 1958, Box ML MSS. 2083/422, op.cit.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.


52. Circular 58/324, 19 September 1958, op.cit.


54. Worker, 4 February 1959, p.12.

55. Ibid., 18 February 1959, p.8.


57. Worker, 4 February 1959, p.1.

58. Ibid., 29 April 1959, p.1.

59. Returning Officer's Report, Box ML MSS. 2083/94, op.cit.


62. Circular 59/154, 10 July 1959, Box ML MSS. 2083/454, op.cit.

63. Dodkin, op.cit.

64. Circular 59/154, op.cit.

65. Ibid.

66. Circular 60/125, 27 May 1960, Box ML MSS. 2083/455, op.cit.

67. Dodkin, op.cit.

68. Sydney Morning Herald, 8 August 1959, p.7.


70. Circular 60/51 Officers' Report, Box ML MSS. 2083/455. op.cit.


74. Dodkin, *op.cit.*

75. M. Dodkin - Interview with F. Daly, 28 November 1989.

76. Circular 60/229, 28 October 1960, Box ML MSS. 2083/435, *op.cit.*

77. Circular 60/234, 11 November 1960, *op.cit.*

78. Dodkin, J.A. Mulvihill, *op.cit.*

Chapter 9 - The Commander in Chief.


4. *Worker*, 21 June 1961, pp.6-7 & 9. (The text has the incorrect spelling of 'Labour' and has been changed.)


18. C.T. Oliver, President's Address, 1962 A.L.P. N.S.W. Conference, Box ML MSS. 2083/428, op.cit.


22. C.T. Oliver's President's Address, 1964 A.L.P. N.S.W. Conference, Box ML MSS. 2083/119 op.cit.


24. Dodkin, Mulvihill interview, op.cit., (E.G. Whitlam used the argument that impoverished schools should receive government aid, whether run by the State, the Church or private organisations.)

25. Letter from J.A. Mulvihill to C.T. Oliver, 22 May 1963.


29. Oliver, President's Address 1964, op.cit.


31. Ibid.


33. Raxworthy, op.cit.


35. Raxworthy, op.cit.


37. Dodkin, J.A. Mulvihill interview, op.cit.


40. Returning Officer's report 1963 A.L.P. N.S.W. Conference, Box ML MSS.2083/429 and Box ML MSS.2083/430, *op.cit.*


42. Circular 64/83, Box ML MSS.2083.459, *op.cit.*

43. *Worker*, 24 February 1965, p.7. (Dougherty's rejection of all the members of the Parliamentary Labor Party might seem to be over-reaction. However, it must be remembered that the vendetta between Dougherty and Clive Cameron had been over a long period. Cameron's attack on Dougherty and the Union in the Parliament in 1958, led to his expulsion from the A.W.U. This in turn led to Cameron seeking redress in the Courts.)


52. Minutes 1965 A.L.P. N.S.W. Conference, Box ML MSS.2083/432, *op.cit.*


56. Oliver, President's Address 1965, Box ML MSS.2083/432, *op.cit.*

57. Dodkin, Muivhill interview, *op.cit.*
58. Letter from J.A. Mulvihill to C.T. Oliver, 26 June 1963, re 
meeting with Acting Premier Renshaw on 3 July 1963, Box ML MSS.2083/55, 
op.cit.

59. Letter from J.A. Mulvihill to C.T. Oliver, 2 July 1963, Box ML MSS. 
2083/55, op.cit.

60. Dodkin, Mulvihill interview, op.cit.

61. Circular 64/138, Box ML MSS.2063/459, op.cit.

62. Dodkin, Mulvihill interview, op.cit.

63. Worker, 9 September 1965, p.10.
Chapter 10 - Changing times.


6. Ibid., 14 December 1966, p.5


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.


15. Worker, 8 March 1967, p.B.

16. Ibid., p.7.

17. Ibid.


20. Ibid.
29. Letter F. Carr, Secretary Wangi Wangi Branch, to Senator J. Keefe, 5.5.67, Box ML MSS. 2083/130, *op.cit*.
30. *Ibid*.
31. Letter from F. Carr, Secretary, Robertson F.E.C., 5.5.67, Box ML MSS 2083/130, *op.cit*.
32. A.L.P. N.S.W. Branch report to Federal Executive, Circular 67/159, *op.cit*.
33. C.T. Oliver, President's Address, 1967 A.L.P. N.S.W. Conference, Box ML MSS.2083/438, *op.cit*.
34. *Ibid*.
36. How to vote ticket, Box ML MSS.2083/438, *op.cit*.
40. Letter C.T. Oliver to W.R. Colbourne, 26 October 1967, Box ML MSS.2083/385, *op.cit*.
42. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 8 October 1968, p.4.

228
Chapter 11 - Extraordinary Forces.


4. Ibid., p.8.

5. Ibid., p.2.


15. Letter from L.R. Malady, Secretary Figtree Branch, 9 March 1968, Box ML MSS.2083/387, op.cit.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 12 August 1968, p.16.

28. Ibid., pp.16-17.


30. Worker, 8 January 1969.


32. Ibid.


34. Letter from J.O. Sullivan, Chairman Caringbah Branch to A.L.P. State Secretary, 27 January 1969, Box ML MSS.2083/389, op.cit.


36. Ibid., 19 February 1969, p.5.

37. Ibid.

38. Letter from T. Dougherty to Branch Secretaries, Box ML MSS. 2083/389, op.cit.


41. Letter from Mrs. D. Bonser, Padstow Branch, 7 February 1969 to W.R. Coulbourne, Box ML MSS. 2083/262, op.cit.

42. Ibid., letter from W.R. Colbourne to Mrs. D. Bonser, 18 February 1969.

43. Letter from W.R. Colbourne to M.P. Cooney, Secretary, Whitegates Birmingham Branch, 20 March 1969, Box ML MSS. 2083/192, op.cit.

44. Circular 54/337, Box ML MSS. 2083/449, op.cit.


47. Dodkin, Armitage, op.cit.

48. Ibid.


50. Dodkin, Armitage, op.cit.

51. Notes, Box ML MSS. 2083/131, op.cit.

52. Roneod leaflet, Box ML MSS. 2083/258, op.cit.


54. Ibid.


57. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 8 May 1969, p.5.


63. Worker, 15 October 1969, p.4.
64. Ibid.
66. Ibid., pp.3-4.
67. Ibid., pp.4-6.
68. Ibid., p.7.
69. Ibid., p.8.
70. Ibid., p.15.
71. Dodkin, Lake, op.cit.
73. Ibid.
74. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 23 December 1969, p.3.
75. Worker, 24 December, 1969, p.4.
77. Ibid., 7 November 1969, p.45.
78. Ibid., 17 January 1970, (attachement pp.1-10)
79. Ibid.,
80. Ibid., pp. 17, 20 & 23.
81. Ibid., p.20.
83. Ibid. p.42.
84. Ibid., p.39.
85. Ibid., p.43.
86. Ibid. p.44.
87. Ibid., p.45.
88. Ibid., p.129.


95. M. Dodkin - Interview with F. Lake, 5 March 1990.


98. Ibid., p.7.

99. Ibid., p.6.


101. Ibid.


104. Turner, op.cit.

105. Ibid.

106. 'Right Digs In' in Topic of the Week, Incentive, 15 December 1969, Box ML MSS. 2083/444, op.cit.


108. Turner, op.cit.


110. Ibid.

111. Turner, op.cit., p.405.

112. Ibid.
113. Carew, op. cit., p.25.


120. A.W.U. N.S.W. Branch Executive Minutes, 6 February 1971, p.2.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid., p.15.

123. Ibid., 23 February 1971, p.7.

124. Ibid., 28 November 1971, p.5.

125. M. Dodkin - Interview with F. Lake, 5 March 1990.

126. Ibid. and Worker, 16 February 1972, p.4.


130. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Audio:
Rexworthy, R. 
Australians at Work - Union Leaders - C.T. Oliver, 1985.

Dodkin, M. 
J.A. Mulvihill, 9 February 1990.

Interviews:
J. Armitage 6 March 1990.
F. Daly 28 November 1989.
V. Higgins 15 February 1990.
M. O'Shea 8 December 1989.
B. Spears 15 February 1990.
S. Valencic 3 March 1990.
D. Young 10 May 1989.

Judgements:
Industrial Commission of N.S.W. 55/82, 28 February & 3 March 1955.

Minutes:

Records:
Reports:


NEWSPAPERS:

Central Queensland News 23 February 1956.
Century 16 June 1954.
Crookwell Gazette 28 March 1956.
North West Champion, Morgen 9 July 1956.
BOOKS:


Santamaria, B.A.  Against the Tide, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1981.

JOURNALS:

Campbell, I.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,

Chan, K.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,
XVII, April 1971.

Hope, D.

Matthews, T.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,
2, August 1971.

McCallum, D.M.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,

Nairn, N.B.
Historical Studies Australia and New 

6 1851-1890, Melbourne University Press, 
Carlton, 1976.

Rawson, D.W.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,

Turner, K.
Australian Journal of Politics and History

Westerway, P.B.
Australian Journal of Politics and History,

Mills, C.P. & 
Lambert, E.G.A. (eds.)
Australian Industrial Law Review, Vol. XII 
No. 12, 30 May 1970.

Federal Law Reports, Commonwealth Industrial 
Court, 1958.

Incentive, 15 December 1969.

LEAFLET:

The Voice of the Rank and File, August 1961.