O'Rooney TOPS THE POLL!!
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CHAPTER 1

Faction Wars

The Role of the AWU

Since its foundation in 1894 by an amalgamation of the Shearers’ Union with other mainly rural unions, the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) had been the largest and most powerful union in New South Wales. The restructuring of the Labor Party from the original Labor Electoral League (LEL) to the Political Labor League (PLL) in 1895 was engineered by the AWU and designed to give that union a dominant voice in the party. The first modern faction in the NSW Labor Party was the construction by the AWU of the Industrial Section in 1915, featuring ‘Industrialists’ hostile to Premier Holman. Within a year or two it was itself dividing into internal factions (or fractions), resulting in the collapse of the Industrial Vigilance Council, as it then called itself, in 1919. The AWU continued in control of the machinery of the party – Executive and Conference – while the more radical ideologues left to form a new Socialist party or to join the Communist Party when it was founded in 1920. However, the hegemony of the AWU became very stormy under the leadership of John Bailey, bringing complete chaos to the party at all levels by 1923. Its reputation for corrupt internal party manipulations, as also its intemperate use of discipline to expel the parliamentary leader, James Dooley, early in 1923 helped to mobilise virtually all other forces within the labour movement to oppose it. In that year the parliamentary party had four different leaders – James Dooley until March, Greg McGirr (imposed on Caucus by the AWU-controlled Executive) for six weeks in March and April, WF Dunn (imposed by the Federal Executive) from April to July, and then, elected by Caucus in July, John Thomas Lang. One would think that the party could not long survive in such an environment, (but it won office two years later in 1925).

At the 1923 Annual Conference the AWU lost control of the numbers, allowing the election of a new Executive dominated by a group of trade union leaders with a base in the Labor Council. Part of the problem with this Labor Council faction was that almost the only thing providing unity was opposition to the return of the AWU, and the group very quickly developed a split between those who wanted to provide support for a Lang Government elected in 1925 and a more radical group of unionists – strongly permeated by Communists – promoting a reform agenda that no elected Labor Government could deliver. Communism had already become a central issue in Australian politics at both Commonwealth and
State level. Nationalist leaders such as George Fuller in the NSW election of 1922 and Stanley Bruce in the Federal election of 1925 exploited the issue to embarrass and defeat Labor. Not surprisingly, the factional alliance supporting Lang’s leadership of the parliamentary party was tagged by the Nationalists, along with the metropolitan and rural daily press, as the ‘Trades Hall Reds’.

Even a pattern of opposition between the AWU and its opponents was not consistent, as is documented in Volume 5 of this work. At the 1926 Conference there was an unlikely tactical alliance of Trades Hall militants and the AWU to unseat the more moderate leadership of Magrath and Tyrrell, although that coalition did not extend to the election of a new Executive, which was put together with the combined forces of the Magrath-Tyrrell group and the AWU to try to exclude the more militant Labor Council nominees. The result was the return of the AWU to an effectively majority position on the Executive, but without control of the presidency. The strategic stupidity of such alliances was driven home to the party in 1927 when the divided Executive led a split in the whole party by planning two competing Conferences intended for Easter and June. At the time of the Easter Conference the two Executives indulged in an orgy of expulsions and suspensions of their opponents. Federal intervention was needed to restore some sanity, or at least resolve the immediate split.

Meanwhile, in the parliamentary party, factional divisions were threatening to make Caucus completely unworkable. Lang was confronted from the beginning by a strong group of MPs loyal to the AWU and within a year of his election barely won a challenge to his leadership by one vote. At the heart of this group was a small band of rural MPs whose main concern was the influence of allegedly Communist trade union leaders on Lang. Leading figures were Peter Loughlin (Cootamundra), who nearly unseated Lang in a Caucus challenge in September 1926, Robert Gillies (Byron), Vernon Goodin (Murray) and William ‘Digger’ Dunn (Wammerawa). They were joined by city-based MPs like Tom Mutch (Botany), Edward McTiernan (Western Suburbs) and HV Evatt (Balmain), who distrusted Lang’s authoritarian style and his factional maneuverings. The November 1926 Conference protected Lang from a leadership challenge for the life of the Parliament, and the 1927 Easter Conference extended the ‘Lang dictatorship’ by effectively stripping Caucus of its right to dismiss the leader. (According to the new rules it would need a three-quarters majority, and Lang always had the basic numbers to prevent that.) To the dismay of the AWU the Unity Conference of 1927 confirmed the ‘Lang dictatorship’ indefinitely. It is highly unlikely that Lang could have survived a Caucus vote in 1926. Yet he continued as Leader until 1939 - presiding over a divided party in which he was the main source of division.
INTRODUCTION

Lang’s faction

Since Lang had come into Parliament in 1913 without a trade union or factional base, he knew that his chances of surviving as Leader after he was elected in 1923 were slim. To protect himself from the dominant AWU faction of John Bailey which supported other candidates such as Loughlin for the leadership, he turned for support to the main industrial enemies of the AWU in the Labor Council and outside. Albert Willis put together a coalition of such unions, under the leadership of his own Miners’ Federation.

Willis had split from the AWU-dominated Industrial Vigilance Council in 1919 over issues related to the One Big Union movement and the reluctance of the AWU to embrace a radical socialist agenda. He went on to take a leading role in the formation of an Industrial Socialist Labor Party that contested the 1920 NSW election against Labor, but resisted the trend of radicals to move to the Communist Party founded in 1920. Willis was never a Communist, although his union was militant and contained some Communists. He himself was a lay preacher, looking to the Gospels rather than to Marx to justify his socialist ideals; he founded the Christian Fellowship Council in 1923 to promote these values. He saw the Trades Hall Reds, led by Jock Garden, as untrustworthy allies. When he realized the advantages of supporting Lang as leader of the Parliamentary Party, he could usually rely on the strong support of fellow Miners’ Federation colleague, John Baddeley (MLA, Newcastle). He found other allies in the union movement who agreed with him about the AWU and the Communists. The main figures were from moderate unions with a strong membership in the city and suburbs: Edward Magrath was the secretary of the Printing Industry Employees’ Union which had always been at the centre of NSW Labor politics; Jim Tyrrell was a foundation member, president, and later secretary of the Federated Municipal and Shire Council Employees’ Union. Both men completely dominated their organizations and moved easily into executive positions in the Labor Party and to controlling the new Labor Daily newspaper that was crucial to Lang’s cause. They were both nominated to the Upper House in 1925, as part of Lang’s first attempt to get the Governor to appoint a Labor majority that could abolish the Legislative Council.

Other unions who shared an interest in supporting Lang against left and right included important white-collar unions such as the Clerks’ Union (even though it had Communist leadership at the time) and more radical industrial unions like the Waterside Workers’ Federation. It was a makeshift coalition which found its main unity in supporting Lang against his enemies. In that aim it could rely upon rank and file support in many Conference issues even from members of the AWU and Communist groups, despite the hostility of the leadership of those two factions, and from factionally uncommitted members of local branches.
Who were Trades Hall Reds?

The power base for Lang’s factional support could be found in trade unions suspicious of the AWU and the Reds of the TLC, and in the propaganda vehicle of the Labor Daily. The Communist leadership in the Labor Council earned that group its name of ‘Trades Hall Reds’, and in the past Willis had been associated with people like Garden, with whom he had led the walkout from the Industrial Vigilance Council and the Labor Party in 1919. Lang’s faction may have had some members in ‘Trades Hall’, but was not ‘red’. There were, however, Communists both in the Labor Council and trying to infiltrate the Labor Party. In fact the main officers of Trades Hall from 1919 through the 1920s were Communists and fellow travellers – J Howie (Coopers), Jock Garden (Sail-makers), A McPherson (Letter Carriers), JA Beasley (ETU) and W Gibb (Clothing Trades). However, these men – as much as they may have merited the tag of Trades Hall Reds – were not part of Lang’s factional support in this period. Moreover, the argument used against Lang, that he was a tool in the hands of the unions, while the unions were controlled by Communists, had very little foundation at that time. Largely because of its Communist domination, many NSW trade unions disaffiliated from the Labor Council so that by 1927, according to Raymond Markey (Appendix A 1.2), only 46 unions out of a total of more than 170 were affiliated to Trades Hall.

More importantly, the real Trades Hall Reds were a distinct threat, not a support, to Lang during the 1920s. In 1921 the Federal Executive of the ALP had sponsored an important ‘All Australian Trade Union Congress’, partly to support a socialist objective in the Labor Party, and partly to attract union support back to the party after the split of the radicals in 1919 to form the Socialist Party and then the Communist Party. One of its recommendations, binding on State branches of the ALP, was to readmit members who had walked out of the party or been expelled at that time. Subsequently men like Howie, Garden, McPherson, Beasley, Gibb, Rutherford, Kilburn (not to forget Willis himself) took their places at annual Conferences of the NSW ALP and most joined a recognizable faction to the left of the Willis/Lang supporters. At the 1924 Conference opposition from a radical ticket with a strong Communist flavour prompted the Willis Executive to ban Communists from being simultaneously members of the ALP. However, this was difficult to enforce and at the 1926 Conference the radicals were still organized and disruptive, helping the AWU to dislodge president Magrath and vice-president Tyrrell (both Lang supporters) from their Executive positions. The ban on Communists was reaffirmed at the 1927 Easter Conference, controlled by Lang supporters, and reinforced by the Unity Conference later in 1927. This did not convince Lang’s enemies; when Jock Garden gained acceptance in the party by renouncing membership of the
Communist Party that he had helped to found, it was taken as a sign that Communists were still influential in the party.

**Lang, puppet or dictator?**

The consistent argument of the AWU and the Sydney press after the election of Lang to the leadership in 1923 was that he was a puppet, under the control of militant and ‘Red’ trade unions. Certainly, during the 1920s Lang depended upon his supporters in the trade union movement, especially Willis, Magrath and Tyrrell, to control Conference and Executive so that he could maintain his authority in the parliamentary party. The decisions of the 1927 Easter Conference to implement the ‘Red Rules’ were designed to make that control permanent, and the effective withdrawal of the right of Caucus to dismiss their Leader made Lang almost unassailable.

Nevertheless, by the time he won the 1925 election Lang had acquired his own power base – the branch membership and potential Labor voters, especially in the city. During 1925 and 1926 the new Premier had delivered on a number of important promises to the labour movement in ways that previous Labor governments in New South Wales had not. Although in retrospect it is easy to criticize his record as only moderate, the trade union movement and poor families had reason to be grateful, given the difficult economic conditions of those years and the fierce resistance of the Upper House to all his reforms. On the great symbolic issue – central to the hostility of the industrialists to Holman – Lang showed genuine intent to get rid of the Upper House. He did not succeed, of course, but friends and opponents were convinced that he was serious in the attempt. Whatever may be said about the later career of Jack Lang, in 1925-26 he was greatly admired within the labour movement and among potential Labor voters. The consequences can be seen in the Conferences of the time, where Lang was received with adulation by rank and file members. Even the trade unions who opposed him on the right and the left had to yield to the popular support among their membership. And the unions that supported him had nowhere else to go. From that time on it was Lang manipulating the unions and their membership, not the other way round. When Conference confirmed Lang as party leader for the term of Parliament, and later indefinitely, Lang gained complete domination over his Caucus. There is, then, some justification in the accusations of his party dictatorship, especially after 1927.

One of the most influential accounts of the early history of the NSW ALP – Gordon Childe’s *How Labour Governs* – makes an interesting argument about the importance of ideas about “proletarian democracy”, with a clash between the values of elected politicians and the expectations of “workers’ representation” (which is the key phrase in the sub-title of the work). Childe was clearly correct when he explained that
many leaders of the trade union movement simply expected the politicians to do what they were told when they made decisions in Parliament. Labor Premiers like McGowen, Holman, Storey and Dooley explicitly resisted such pressure, insisting that the parliamentary party had to be free to implement party policy or not, according to political and economic pressures of the day. Both Holman and Dooley were expelled by industrialist leaders for their resistance. Lang, on the other hand, welcomed the symbolism of proletarian democracy, insisting that he was the chosen representative of the workers, implementing their will in Parliament in the face of misguided critics in the trade union movement and intransigence from the bosses in their privileged Upper House. The important question to ask is not how genuine Lang was, but whether he was believed. Among large sections of the trade union movement, branch members, and among working families who voted, he was.

**Conference themes**

Compared with earlier periods, one thing obvious to a reader of these Conferences is that very little general business was conducted. There was very little attention to development of policy for an incoming Labor Government. Compare, for example, the Conferences before 1910 with those before the electoral victory of 1925. No Conference at all was held in 1925, lest factional strife disturb the electorate. Factional war was the real business of the party in these years. Time was taken up with disputes about credentialling of delegates, election of agenda committees and then of next year’s Executive. Matters of internal party discipline dominated the early days of every Conference. The great issue throughout these years was party management, not any policy to be implemented by a Labor Government. How would party rules govern the selection of delegates to Conference and the election of the State Executive? Speeches of party dignitaries took priority – and they tended to be calls for unity in the face of factionalism (even when many of those same dignitaries were deeply involved in factional politics). By the time Conference reached into the second week attendance dropped off and eventually Conference would be closed, leaving the untouched business paper for the incoming Executive to handle. That, in fact, was what the dominant faction usually preferred.

Related to factionalism was an endemic discontent in the party with the rules affecting preselection. This discontent was exacerbated by the implications of Proportional Representation for seats in the Legislative Assembly – where a list of candidates was endorsed by the party there was constant bickering about whether some candidates should get priority in electoral advertising or be given a place higher or lower on the list. There was some support for doing away with preselection and party endorsement altogether – as was often the case in municipal elections.
Another constant theme of these Conferences was the question of the readmission of members previously expelled – the conscriptionists of 1916, the split of the radicals from the party in 1919, those banished by the AWU vendetta against its critics in 1923, and the Baileyites expelled when the AWU lost control. There was virtual unanimity that there would be no second chance for any of the conscriptionists. Party rules had been changed in 1917 to ensure that their expulsion would be permanent, and it would need a two-thirds majority of any Conference to change that rule. Most requests were summarily and contemptuously dismissed. One former Labor stalwart, Arthur Griffith, appealed a number of times, and seemed to have some support, but no one was prepared to propose that the rule should be changed, so Griffith remained outside the Lang party, even though he had never joined the Nationals. The readmission of the 1919 Socialists and later Communists was imposed on the NSW Branch by the Federal Executive, and they formed the nucleus of a radical faction in 1925 and 1926. These circumstances only served to demand the urgent resolution of the question – whether members of the Communist Party could be simultaneously members of the Labor Party. Critics of the AWU such as former Premier Dooley were accepted back with ease, although it was a different case for Federal MP JH Catts, who had compounded his crime by forming a new party to contest against endorsed Labor candidates. Even enemies of the AWU agreed that that was too much to accept. The memory of the ballot box scandals was too recent for there to be any support for Bailey to be readmitted; he (like Griffith) had to wait for the anti-Lang Federal Labor Party to be formed in NSW to be readmitted in 1931.

Since the foundation of the Labor Party in Queensland and New South Wales at the beginning of the 1890s the main electoral base of the party in both States had been outside the metropolitan areas – in the wheat and sheep areas where the AWU and railway unions were strong, and in mining districts like Broken Hill, Illawarra and the Hunter Valley. The years of these Conferences in the early 1920s show the party’s hold being challenged in these constituencies. Partly this was a function of the AWU (very strong in rural districts) leading the opposition to Lang on the issue of control of the party by ‘Reds’. There was a genuine fear of Communism in the countryside that was articulated by many of the rural MPs who tended to be Lang’s critics in Caucus. Many small landholders and entrepreneurs of country towns had previously looked to Labor to protect them from the city-based Liberal or National Party’s preference for bankers and businessmen. Now, so Lang’s critics argued, perhaps Lang was an even worse danger, and he was from the city, too. The other factor was that these years marked the entry into the electoral contest of a new Country Party, formed in New South Wales to contest the 1920 election. Initially the Country Party took seats mainly from the Nationals, but the chaos in the Labor Party was a godsend for its
prospects. The Labor Party was aware of the danger; every Conference discussion of the need for rule changes included calls for regional conferences to feed into the annual Conference and for better representation of rural delegates. Lang himself enthusiastically promoted special rural and regional conferences throughout this period. Nevertheless, the Lang era saw Labor support in the country eroded. Partly this was clouded while the electoral system was Proportional Representation (until 1927) because that gave Labor seats in some areas, such as the North Coast, where previously it had had no success. The decline in rural support accelerated in the 1930s, so that when Bill McKell took over from Lang as leader of the party in 1939 he saw one of his major tasks as reviving support for Labor in the countryside.
CHAPTER 2

Australian Labor Party, New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 1 – 17 June 1918

Report in The Australian Worker (and Daily Telegraph)

The Industrial Section faction, led by the AWU, was in firm control of the State Executive, while the party as a whole was in better shape than could have been expected after the disastrous split over conscription two years previously. The year 1917 had seen the Holman Nationalist administration win an election easily and consolidate its power, but the Labor Party had performed creditably so that it retained enough of a base in Parliament for some prospect of victory in the next election. The parliamentary leadership of John Storey, who had been installed after the brief reign of Ernest Durack, was effective in maintaining some unity in the parliamentary team. A second referendum on conscription in 1917 seriously embarrassed the Holman Government and resulted in an even more convincing defeat for conscriptionists in New South Wales.

In the wider party, however, serious divisions were opening up between moderates and radicals. To the left of the AWU, the proponents of One Big Union (OBU) were expressing contempt for the parliamentary path to social justice and were talking revolution. The year 1917, of course, had seen the successful Russian revolutions that swept away the Tsarist regime. A disastrous transport strike in 1917 was crushed by the State Government, with severe reprisals against strike leaders and unions that radicalised even many previously moderate Labor supporters. These divisions would very soon crack open the solidarity of the Industrial Section machine and introduce a long period of factional infighting. Already, as was evident on the floor of Conference, there were clear differences of opinion between the State Executive machine and the parliamentary leadership. The rhetoric of the Executive Report reflected a desire for the end of capitalism (blamed for the war) and the substitution of a socialist system: “It is, therefore, increasingly apparent that we must adopt a clear-cut policy, involving the abolition of the wage-system of Capitalism and the substitution of the collective ownership of land and the tools of production under democratic control”. Clearly,
parliamentary leaders like John Storey did not have such revolutionary change high on their political agenda.

The AWU, which had a dominant role in the Industrial Section and the State Executive, was promised an improved voice for rural members of the party. One of the major items of discussion at this Conference was the party’s policy on land, with recommended motions from meetings of an earlier Rural Conference chaired by Jack Bailey. Much of the content of the proposed policy reflected issues going back over a century and of symbolic more than realistic value. However, many potential Labor voters in the country would have been reassured that the party was taking them seriously.

The account provided by the Australian Worker is quite disorganised, with its correspondent not sure whether to report events thematically or chronologically. Bits of debate appear in different parts of the paper and over different weekly editions. Consequently, in the text below a chronological arrangement has been preferred, with debates provided on the days when they occurred.

Executive Report of ALP, NSW Branch, for 1917

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Twenty-Seventh Annual Report for year ending December 31st, 1917, together with the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Women’s Central Organising Committee.

Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, Executive Report

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 27th Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Political Labor Movement of NSW is herewith submitted for your consideration.

Conferences—State

The Conference of 1917 was to have been held at Easter-time, but owing to the State Elections in March, followed by the Federal Election in May, the opening was postponed till June.
A large number of delegates attended the IOOF Temple on Saturday, June 2, when the Conference was opened by the President, Mr JW Doyle, MLA.

A heavy Agenda Paper was presented and the usual Committees appointed to assist in the efficient conduct of the business. Much useful work was accomplished in further consolidating the Movement. One of the most important items of business was the alteration of the basis of representation on Conference, which as amended provides for a delegate for every thousand members or part thereof. This reform strengthens the industrial basis on which the ultimate success and stability of the Political Movement rests. At the same time those not directly connected with Industrial Unionists, yet having the same scale of representation, have an added incentive to add to their ranks so as to maintain that healthy outside influence which makes for breadth and strength.

The most notable achievements of the Conference were the adoption of comprehensive Peace proposals, a ‘Soldier’ policy of a just and generous character, and a country policy calculated to assist the wealth producers on the land, and restrict the plundering methods of the cormorant-like middlemen, carefully framed by those delegates most conversant with rural conditions and requirements. A displacement of the present governing party can alone give the opportunity to institute the widespread benefits which would accrue from its adoption.

The foregoing subjects, together with numerous resolutions passed by Conference, will be found embodied in the Annual Rule Book.

**Interstate**

It was intended to hold the regular triennial Interstate Labor Conference during the year 1917, and the following were elected as New South Wales delegates: Messrs P Adler, J Graves, G Sutherland, AC Willis, Arthur Rae, and Miss May Matthews.

Owing to the uncertainty of the political situation, the big industrial upheaval, and other causes, this gathering had to be postponed to a date yet to be fixed in 1918, when the many political and social problems arising out of the war will be dealt with, and it is hoped united efforts agreed upon for the furtherance of the Democratic Peace Proposals of the Movement. The Conference is to be held in Perth, WA, and it is confidently expected will do much to assist in consolidating Labor’s fighting forces in that State. The completion of the East-West railway connecting the hitherto isolated State of Western Australia with her sister States in the East is a matter for gratification, and will, it is trusted, materially forward closer social and industrial cooperation.

Many of the events which made up the stirring record of the Movement in 1916 had not run their full course during the period covered by the last Annual Report. This Report takes up the threads of the great human drama connected with Australia’s part in the war, and
presents a brief summary of the main incidents connected with the fight against conscription for military service abroad.

That these events are of historic importance to all Australia cannot be doubted, and their influence on the democracies of widely-separated and far-distant lands may be of great and enduring significance.

When the last Annual Report was issued the ex-Labor Prime Minister, who had resigned after the disruption of the Party, had advised the Governor-General to recommission him to form a Ministry. Although he only had 13 followers in the Representatives out of a House of 75 members, and 11 supporters in the Senate, out of a total of 36 members, the Governor-General without hesitation accepted his advice, and at the end of 1916 the Ministry of WM Hughes, with five followers in the Representatives, existed by the grace of Cook, the Leader of 36 Liberals; the Labor Party numbering only 25.

It will thus be seen that the Ministerialists were the smallest party who had ever attempted to hold office, their Conscriptionist policy being responsible for their immunity from direct attack by the Liberals.

It was not possible that this position could continue. Cook and his followers were determined to secure a share of the loaves and fishes of office, and every day grew hungrier and angrier as they watched the insolent tail wagging the unwieldy dog. At the same time they were frightened to throw Hughes out on a vote of censure for fear such action might lead to a dissolution and a General Election, which they dreaded above all things.

Eventually a conference was arranged between Hughes and Cook to discuss terms of amalgamation. Week after week passed by, while these noble “Win-the-War” patriots discussed the vital question whether the Hughesites should have an equal number of portfolios with the Cookites, or should be satisfied with something less. This disgraceful haggling, due to the unblushing greed and ambition of both sides, became at length such a public scandal, such a smellful commentary upon the high-souled professions with which they attempted to disguise their sordid aims, that partisan newspapers which had spared no efforts to bring about the unholy alliance, became ashamed of the time-wasting exhibition. The jibes of the press and mutual alarm for their future safety at length resulted in an agreement by which the new Fusion was accomplished, Mr Hughes retaining the Prime Ministership. Another shuffle of portfolios had to take place, Hughes throwing overboard Senator Lynch (WA), Bamford (Queensland), A Poynton (South Australia), Laird Smith (Tasmania), and WG Spence (NSW). These members of the stop-gap Labor Renegade Ministry had to be sacrificed to make way for Joseph Cook, John Forrest, PM Glynn, LE Groom, William Watt and Senator Millen, who together with Hughes, Jensen, Webster, Senator Pearce and Senator Russell of the previous Cabinet constituted the new team which adopted the title of the “Australian National War Government”.

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The events which followed throw lasting discredit upon the politics of Australia, and clearly exemplify the contention of the Labor Movement that the morality of the Tory Party has no solid foundation, and when put to the test is invariably sacrificed to their immediate material interests.

**Stifling Freedom**

The Hughes Government passed the War Precautions Act based upon the Imperial measure known as the “Defence of the Realm” Act. Ostensibly this measure was passed for the purpose of giving the Government legal powers to protect Australia and the Empire against any emergency arising from the war.

Labor members, believing that the powers, though necessary, were dangerous, permitted the passing of the Act. The flagrant abuse of those powers for purely party purposes, and in many instances for the personal ends of the Prime Minister, constitutes a record in Australian history for political sabotage of the basest character. It is to be hoped that the experience gained by Labor representatives of the peril to our free institutions, arising from extreme power being vested in the hands of one or two unscrupulous men, will prevent similar mistakes being made in the future.

**Usurping Power**

The two main objects for which the new Government bent all the energies of the National Party were the prolongation of the life of Parliament, and the appointment of the Prime Minister and Mr Cook as Ambassadors to England, with plenary powers.

Notwithstanding the Referendum of October 1916 had shown that Mr Hughes and his Liberal friends were entirely out of touch with Australian desires and sentiments, they had the brazen assurance to virtually appoint themselves to these positions, and further, in order to placate their candid critic, Sir William Irvine, it was arranged that that embodiment of anti-Australianism was to accompany Messrs Hughes and Cook to England as Constitutional Adviser. In order that this costly picnic could be safely enjoyed for an unlimited period, it was necessary to provide against political accidents during their intended absence. This could only be secured by prolonging the life of Parliament (which had nearly run its full term), and then closing its doors so that no effective criticism of the Government would be possible until they chose to return.

Measures to secure this happy result were introduced, and every trick and stratagem known to the profession of political engineering was practised to attain the end.
Barabbas Still Preferred

The sensational disclosures by Senator Watson, of NSW, of alleged attempts by the Prime Minister to purchase his vote for prolongation was met by Mr Hughes issuing a writ for damages for an enormous amount. Had he succeeded in winning his suit, Senator Watson would have been ruined and his seat forfeited, but after litigation had commenced the action was abandoned, Mr Hughes paying the whole of the costs incurred by both parties. Comment would be needless were it not for the fact that the electors, smitten with jingophobia, repaid Watson’s courage by defeat and Hughes’ apostasy with victory, thus following the illustrious example of the ancient Jews in their preference for Barabbas.

The small Labor majority in the Senate formed the only obstacle to the successful passage of their measures, and the efforts to buy or bludgeon that majority culminated in the celebrated Ready incident which the public will long remember. The attempt to make tools [fools?] of the Tasmanian members led to the general condemnation of the scandalous methods employed, and so disgusted their own supporters that McWilliams, MHR for Franklin (Tasmania), and Senators Keating and Bakhap from the same State, all Nationalist members, unexpectedly refused to be parties to the conspiracy, and the discreditable scheme fell through on the very threshold of accomplishment. The result was that the picnic to England had to be cancelled, and a General Election was precipitated.

The 1917 Federal Elections

Some little time before this the new organisation for voluntary recruiting had adopted the title of the “Win-the-War” League, to stimulate popular enthusiasm for the war, without regard to party politics. In spite of the emphatic protests of the Director-General of Recruiting (Mr D Mackinnon), the “National” Government deliberately filched the title, and as the “Win-the-War” Government played upon the emotions of the electors with a platform of reckless promises, coupled with the foulest abuse of their opponents.

Aided by an unscrupulous press, which disseminated falsehoods, invented facts, and suppressed the truth, these tactics were successful, and the self-styled Nationalists won the General Election which took place on May 5, 1917. In the House of Representatives they secured a large majority; in the Senate, where only half the members were due for retirement, they won the whole of the 18 seats, leaving the Labor Party with only the 12 Senators returned in 1914.

The Prime Minister, who had represented West Sydney since the inception of Federation, was not courageous enough to face the prospect of defeat, and to save his skin ran away to Bendigo, Victoria, where by
lavish promises and still more questionable methods he won the seat from the Labor member, Mr Hampson.

Those members of the Labor Movement who had left our ranks or been expelled over the Conscription issue, and who had loudly protested that they were as good, or better, Labor men than those remaining in the Movement, had their professions put to the test at this election.

Their actions showed the hollowness of their pretensions, as they were found standing unanimously behind the newly-created “National” Party, which numbered among its supporters every representative of wealth and special privilege in Australia, together with the narrow, the prejudiced and the ignorant who had always been arrayed in opposition to Democracy and Progress. Some of these Labor Renegades actually ran for Parliamentary seats supported by Tory funds and Tory organisation, and in one instance (Mr Lamond, of Illawarra) this treason was rewarded by a seat among the ranks of the spoilers.

These same Renegade Labor Conscriptionists were later on found among the bitter enemies of the men on strike during the spring of 1917, thus by their own actions justifying the worst that had ever been said against them during the Conscription fight.

The unprincipled part played by the newspaper press, particularly the metropolitan dailies, once again emphasises the enormous influence wielded by unscrupulous journalism in the formation of public opinion based on distorted facts and misleading information. Owned by the wealthy predatory class, these journals are the only purveyors of the news of the world to the reading public; this monopoly-advantage is used to suppress or distort all facts which might be detrimental to their capitalistic interests, and poison at its source the news they vend. The only effective remedy is for the working classes to find the funds required to finance and control their own daily press. By a little organisation and self-denial this could be speedily accomplished.

The career of this new “Win-the-War” Government up to the date of the second Referendum requires only brief mention. Their glib promises to the electors to safeguard the interests of the people from exploitation have been shamelessly broken, and every possible opportunity has been given to the Huns of Commerce to rook the community with ever-increasing audacity. The destruction of wheat by mice and weevils while no efforts have been made to build ships to transport the golden grain to the starving millions of Britain and her Allies, is a heartbreaking instance of either their callous disregard of their responsibilities, or of their monumental incapacity for business.

The War and After

The colossal conflict now convulsing the world shows signs of approaching its end, not through any display of wisdom on the part of either diplomatists or statesmen, but through the pressure of hunger and the
rapidly growing discontent among the working classes of every nation engaged in this terrific struggle.

There are ominous signs that if not soon terminated by a general appeal to reason the war will merge into revolution spreading like a conflagration throughout the starved and ruined nations of Europe. In any case the political and economic changes following the war must be tremendous. The awakened workers will never again consent to exist under the system which has brought about such a frightful world tragedy, in which they and their loved ones are the principal victims. Civilisation is on the verge of destruction, and can only be saved by the adoption of more just and humane conditions for the future government of mankind. While Australia, situated so far from the centre-point of world politics, escapes the full fury of the storm, it cannot remain unaffected by the results. The same causes which have produced the present cataclysm are at work in our isolated community, and if not removed must eventually lead to the same end. As a matter of fact our political and economic conditions are entirely controlled by the war, and our fortunes must rise or fall with those of other nations.

Australia, therefore, occupies a place in the world-problems awaiting solution, and cannot afford to fall behind and neglect her opportunities. As an enlightened democracy pregnant with the quickening love of Freedom, her achievements depend upon the measure of courage and ability with which she acts. As the party representing the vast majority of the organised democrats of a Continent, the Australian Labor Party must lead the van in demanding those economic and social reforms, which the ruling classes must peacefully concede, or surrender to a force based on a passionate demand for Justice and Equality. Let us, therefore, shape our policy and aims to meet the changed conditions in which the most will be obtained by those possessed of the audacity to make the boldest demands, for “the night is far spent, the day is at hand”.

Repatriation

The repatriation of returned soldiers has so far resulted in the creation of a new Department in which some soft, highly-paid positions have been found for political supporters who have never even volunteered for the Front, except perhaps at a picture show. This Department is provided over by a brand-new Minister, whose portfolio involves another couple of thousand pounds per annum expense to the country, and incidentally shows the value of war-time economy. Being pooled among Ministers it gives them each an increase of nearly £200 per annum. Bills have been passed and conferences held, but so far nothing practical has been done, except a little land settlement by some of the State Governments.

We submit that in framing the terms of a lasting peace the following principles should be observed:-
1. The right of small nations (including Ireland) to political independence.
2. That the European countries occupied by invading armies during the present war be immediately evacuated.
3. That disputed provinces or territories shall choose their own forms of government, or shall be attached to such adjacent countries as the majority of their inhabitants may by plebiscite decide, on the democratic principle that all just government must rest on the consent of the governed. The free exercise of such choice under conditions of political equality to be secured by the appointment of an international commission of control.

Note.—This course (with such safeguards for the rights of minorities in communities of mixed races as the conference might devise) would secure a final settlement of the rival claims for Alsace-Lorraine, Poland, Transylvania, and other territories similarly circumstanced.

4. That, prior to the disbandment of the combatant armies and the merchant navies employed in the war, they shall be utilised by an organised system of volunteer service for restoring the devastated territories at the expense of the invading Powers, which shall also compensate the widows and dependents of all non-combatants, including seamen, who have lost their lives as a result of hostilities.

5. That, where an amicable arrangement cannot be reached by the Peace Conference, in regard to captured colonies and dependencies, such territories shall be placed provisionally under international control.

6. That the freedom of the seas be secured, on the lines laid down by President Wilson of America in his speech at Washington, in May, 1916, where he advocated:—“A universal association of the nations to maintain the inviolate security of the highway of the seas for the common and unhindered use of all the nations of the world”.

7. The abolition of trading in armaments and the prohibition of the private manufacture thereof.

8. The abolition of conscription in all countries simultaneously.

9. The control of foreign relations under a democratic system, based upon publicity, in lieu of the present methods of secret diplomacy.

10. That the existing machinery for International Arbitration be expanded to embrace a concert of Europe, ultimately merging into a world-wide Parliament, as advocated by President Wilson in a recent message to the American Congress.

The recent speeches of Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, are a great advance
on any previous utterances by leading statesmen, and definitely endorse several of our proposals, but fail to deal with fundamental principles.

In the first place we recognise the curse of German Militarism with all its organised power for evil; but we contend that Militarism in any country, or in any age, is bad in principle, and differs in degree only in proportion to the extent of its efficiency, and the length of time its brutalising influences have been operating to deaden and pervert the National conscience.

If, therefore, German Militarism is to be killed by the growth of the spirit of Democracy, Great Britain, America, France and Italy should set the example. This would be the strongest and most effective form of pressure which could be brought to bear upon Germany.

It is quite clear that neither Lloyd George nor President Wilson have gone to the bedrock causes in their proposals. Are these nations prepared to abolish secret diplomacy and secret treaties? Are they prepared to cease expenditure of secret service money for the purpose of espionage and bribery?

It is not Democracy which is “on its trial”, but the statesmen of those countries which profess democracy without making any real attempt to live up to it. The spirit of revolt among the German people which can alone permanently destroy German Militarism can be stimulated and made irresistible if Britain will, followed by her Allies, show Germany that she has nothing to fear from them. Until Britain rises to the occasion and grasps the opportunity to show the world she is fighting with clean hands, there can be no hope of convincing the people of the Central Powers that they are in the wrong and that the Allies are desirous of establishing Justice and Freedom throughout the world.

Australia, the most distant outpost of white civilisation, which has been spared personal contact with war horrors by reason of her isolation, has yet played a conspicuous part in the great world conflict, and the tragedy of the battlefield has cast its shadow in thousands of Australian homes.

It is to be regretted that the Peace proposals previously referred to have not been discussed in Parliament, but the sittings of that body have been short and mainly devoted to the intrigues of the National Party, which in spite of its numerical strength is torn by internal dissensions and jealousies, and so far has proved incapable of doing any useful work. It is to be hoped that these proposals will at an early date be given notice of, as even if their discussion be blocked their appearance on the Business Paper will be valuable as an indication of the Party attitude on this vital matter.

Conscription Resurrected

Following upon the collapse of the strike and the bitterness caused by the vindictiveness of the Government of this State, assisted by the equally
corrupt and class-biased Commonwealth Government, voluntary enlistments fell off considerably. Believing that they had the organised workers hopelessly beaten and crushed in spirit, the employers and their sentimental dupes renewed the agitation for Military Conscription, and fortified the weakness of their arguments by the strength of evidence manufactured for the purpose. Political Generals sent pathetic cables from Europe, Asia and Africa as to the alleged shortage of reinforcements, although the Minister for Defence had just publicly stated that there had as yet been ample reserves available “and the reservoir was not yet dry”.

While the Anzacs were pictured as dying from exhaustion through serving months on end in the trenches without relief, occasionally other cables would slip through describing the times our boys were having in Paris and London, playing football matches behind the lines, or having a prolonged “period of rest” in “an easy sector”.

The daily papers, however, with their usual eagerness to bark for their wealthy advertising clients engaged in “Big Business”, put in overtime painting the horrors of Prussian Militarism, and the moral loveliness of adopting the conscription system in Australia. At length the Victorian arch-coercionist Irvine started out to bang the big drum of Conscription through New South Wales. His proposal was to pass a Conscription Act, then dissolve Parliament and fight the elections on that issue only. Mr Hughes had evidently no intention whatever of raising the Conscription issue again if he could have continued to sidestep it, but the press-boomed reputation of Sir William Irvine forced the pace. Neither Mr Hughes nor his ex-Labor supporters in Parliament cared to risk their fate a second time before the electors they had fooled a few months previously; consequently Mr Hughes hurried to Bendigo and there announced a second Referendum.

Resignation Pledges

The campaign was commenced on the 12th November and was concluded on the 20th December, when the vote was taken. In his policy speech the Prime Minister emphatically averred that unless the Government obtained the Conscription powers asked for “they could not continue to govern the country, and would not attempt to do so”. The second in command, Mr Cook, followed suit with a similar pledge, and Webster, PMG, asserted that “they would not hold office for 24 hours if the numbers were against them”.

Sir William Irvine, the self-righteous Apostle of Political Purity, gave these pledges his blessing, and the whole Nationalist Party accepted the position as evidence of their high-toned political virtue.

During the five and a half weeks between those dates the battle raged fiercely all over the Commonwealth, and the methods resorted to
by the Government eclipsed in malignity, falsehood and abuse of power anything ever experienced in the history of Australia.

There is no need to elaborate the facts, or relate the many incidents in which the Prime Minister acted so disgracefully as to disgust many of his own supporters. The result has again vindicated the Australian reputation for love of Freedom, and the magnificent vote then recorded for Democracy, the news of which has since swept round the world, will yet ring the death-knell of Militarism and Autocracy.

For future reference the following table will be useful as showing the Referendum vote in the various States, in October, 1916, compared with the vote of December, 1917:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1916</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>358,805</td>
<td>474,544</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>353,930</td>
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<td>Queensland</td>
<td>144,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>87,914</td>
<td>119,236</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>94,069</td>
<td>40,884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>48,493</td>
<td>37,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Territories</td>
<td>2,136</td>
<td>1,269</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soldiers' Votes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crew of Transports</td>
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<td>50</td>
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Total for the Commonwealth

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<th></th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
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</table>

Majority for NO, 1916 72,476
Majority for NO, 1917 164,895

It will be seen by the foregoing that NSW, the oldest and most populous State of the Commonwealth, well maintained in 1917 the lead it gave for Freedom in the previous year, the majority for “No” having increased from 117,739 to 143,598.

The Prime Minister, who had pledged himself to resign if Conscription was not carried, was supported by the whole of his Ministry and Party in this attitude, not one of them having made any public repudiation of this deliberate pledge. There is no doubt that this pledge was given for the express purpose of securing the votes of those doubtful supporters who were opposed to Conscription, but feared the accession to power of the Labor Party. Not having the desired effect, there is strong evidence that, at the date of this report, Mr Hughes is strongly repenting his pledge and will use all those unscrupulous stratagems of which he is a past master to devise some way of escape from its consequences. Mr
Hughes’s history precludes the hope that considerations of honor will either influence his decision or direct his actions.

Note.—Since writing the foregoing the course of events has amply justified the forecast, and Australia now stands shamed and dishonored. No longer may the finger of scorn be pointed at the German, nor can any exception be taken to his definition of a treaty or a pledge as “a scrap of paper”.

State Politics

It will be remembered that towards the end of 1916 the Coalition Government, led by Holman, had used its big majority to unconstitutionally prolong the life of Parliament.

That Parliament would have expired by effluxion of time in January, 1917, at the latest. The prolongation allowed it to exist for a further period not exceeding 12 months.

The Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland, is believed to have been antagonistic to the measure, and the friction which resulted eventually led to his recall. Having lulled the electors into the belief that the elections were a long way off, and knowing that in consequence there would be thousands of names off the rolls, the Government suddenly decided to spring the elections upon a totally unprepared community, although, of course, they had been secretly preparing their own party machinery weeks before the general public were made aware of their intentions. The Government had the unscrupulous support of the daily press and the financial support of the Employers’ Federation, and all the other representatives of Capitalism. Hampered by lack of funds and not yet fully recovered from the disruption arising from the Conscription campaign of six months previously, the result of the elections which took place on the 24th March, 1917, was a victory for the Coalition Government, the result being: Labor, 33; Government and Independents combined, 57. The most notable and gratifying feature of the campaign was the crushing defeat of the Renegade Laborites, who had gone over to the “Liberals” in shameless denial of their lifelong professions of devotion to Labor ideals.

These apostate deserters numbered 22, and just half their number were left political corpses on the field of battle. Another such casualty list would have the desirable result of exterminating this undesirable element. The Labor Party more than held its own, losing two and gaining three seats in the country, while in the city Labor lost two seats and gained nine, a total improvement of 50 per cent, and now becomes the Opposition, a position it had not occupied since 1910.

An analysis of the voting shows the total number of votes recorded to be 612,655. Of these the Nationalists received 209,566, Labor 262,655, and the Independents totalled 50,434. The total number on the rolls for the State being 1,109,830. The polling being 63.43 per cent of the
enrolment. The low percentage of electors voting was due largely to the confusion of political thought, brought about by the recent upheaval and the misrepresentations of the daily press which led many to abstain from voting altogether.

Shortly after the elections had firmly seated the Nationalists in office they began to show the cloven hoof. Their first move was to stop most of the railways under construction, and other public works, thus throwing thousands of men on the labor market, while millions of interest bearing capital lie dormant in unfinished projects.

The alleged reason was lack of funds and the impossibility of raising loan moneys owing to war conditions. At the same time Premier Holman, with his family and an expensive suite, took a trip to England for allegedly important reasons of State, which this modern autocrat has not yet seen fit to divulge to the public who have to foot the bill. The Norton Griffiths contract, which was entered into on the solemn assurance of Mr Holman that it would provide ample loan money to finance the State public works, however long and disastrous the war might be, had to be cancelled, and an enormous sum paid to the firm by way of compensation. Thus the public are trebly taxed on this disastrous venture; firstly, the annual interest on the money borrowed; secondly, payment for supervision to Norton Griffiths on all the money expended; thirdly, over £160,000 compensation for the State Government’s failure to go on spending more in the same way. It is to be hoped that some day the Labor Party will be strong enough to insist upon a full inquiry into this financial scandal which is so deeply shrouded in mystery and suspicion.

The Great Strike

During the first week in August a strike commenced in the Government Railway and Tramway Workshops, and soon involved other branches of the Public Service, and spread to private firms, eventually extending to nearly every State in the Commonwealth. This developed into the most serious industrial upheaval since the great Maritime Strike of 1890. The dispute commenced over an attempt by the Railway Commissioners to introduce new methods of management, which the men resented as an American-devised secret speeding-up process, known in the USA as the “Taylor Card System”. The men offered to resume work immediately if promised an independent tribunal to investigate the system. This was arrogantly refused.

Your Executive had just previously convened a meeting of the ladies of the Movement for the purpose of forming a Women’s Finance Committee, whose duty was to devise means to raise funds for the purpose of liquidating the liabilities of the 1916 Conscription fight, and the No-Prolongation and State and Federal contests which followed. The details of a comprehensive finance campaign were arranged, which were rudely
interrupted by the advent of the strike. There was no hesitation, however. Your Executive promptly abandoned efforts on its own behalf, and devoted the whole machinery of the Labor Movement to the specific purpose of raising funds for the relief of the starving women and children. The ladies of the Committee worked unselfishly day and night, and their untiring efforts resulted in no less a sum than £1214/13/2. Never perhaps in the history of Australia has any body of men claiming to be Christians exhibited such brutal barbarity as that shown by the Holman Government. The callousness of Fuller, the Acting-Premier, in stating, “I have laid down definite instruction that in those cases which have arisen because of the breadwinner of the family being on strike, those families will have to stand the responsibility for their actions”, threw upon your Executive the responsibility of appealing to the public to save the women and children from starvation. It is a matter of common knowledge that had your Executive not taken the steps it did, the condition of the helpless women and children in New South Wales would have been too awful to contemplate. For it was solely due to the efforts of your Executive’s Women’s Finance Committee that sufficient publicity was given to the terrible conditions prevailing. The Lord Mayor’s Relief Fund was established in consequence, and later the Government was reluctantly shamed into showing some sense of its responsibility. It will ever be a reflection upon the Nationalists that they allowed their class-bias and prejudices to prevail, for the collectors for the Lord Mayor’s Relief Fund were insulted at every turn, and the trifling amount subscribed by them to relieve the awful distress in the metropolis is a tragic commentary upon the sincerity of the Jingo Imperialists who clamor for the conscription of human life and the ruthless deportation of Australia’s manhood.

Every subsequent step proved that the plausible Acting-Premier, Mr George Fuller, was simply a willing tool in the hands of the Employers’ Federation, which met daily to advise the Government. That the Government and the employers’ organisations were all parties to a conspiracy to break the power of Unionism and force economic conscription upon the working classes was self-evident, and has more recently been proved to the hilt by the discovery of a secret memorandum prepared by Premier Holman and circulated among his colleagues before his departure for Great Britain.

Holman’s Secret Memorandum

During the No-Conscription campaign a secret memorandum dealing with “Recruiting”, which had been drawn up by Mr Holman before his departure for England, was discovered, and eventually published in the daily press. It created a great sensation not only on account of its cold-blooded character, but because of the lurid light it threw upon some of the actions of the State Ministry hitherto more or less shrouded in
mystery. All doubts as to its authenticity were set at rest by the fact that Mr Holman, who was in Melbourne at the time of its publication, confessed to its authorship on his return.

That these proposals meant complete Industrial Conscription and widespread restrictions upon our civil liberties in every direction is self-evident.

All athletic displays were to be entirely suppressed. All places of amusement partially closed, and even when open were compelled to act as Military Recruiting Agencies. The newspapers were to doctor and fake up war news to suit the Government, to publish nothing the Government disapproved, and to be compelled to publish any version of public matters supplied to them by the Government. All single eligible men were to be discharged from every Government department, and all boards and trusts of a public character. Above all, the private employers were to be “got together” to see how far they could agree to discharge all single men of military age, and replace them by married and old men. How far they could replace men by women, young lads and girls, and how far they could dispense with labor in any shape or form.

Finally all newspapers of an anti-Conscriptionist policy were to be carefully watched with a view to suppression.

This is a fair summary of the diabolical and fiendish conspiracy. Industrial slavery was to be brought about by the creation of a huge army of unemployed. Ruin and hunger were to ravage the homes of the industrial classes of this country in order that owners of the earth might maintain their unrestricted sway and thus permanently crush Australian Democracy.

The entire efforts of the Premier have been devoted to a fruitless endeavor to discover how this secret document found the light of day; having in what might have been an unguarded moment admitted the authorship, the chief conspirator stood self-convicted. It is true that Mr Holman has stated that these proposals were turned down by his Cabinet, but the whole course of action taken by the Government during the recent strike shows unmistakably that Fuller and his colleagues eagerly attempted to carry out the industrial portion of their chief’s proposals with the calamitous results now so apparent.

The deliberate treachery embodied in this ingenious document transcends anything ever known in Australia, and should indelibly brand Holman as a political criminal of the worst type. Mr Wade was more than justified when he said, “No decent man will ever believe his word in future, or trust him, or think he is fit to associate with”.

The stoppage of public works previously referred to had glutted the labor market, the slack season in the rural districts further intensified the unemployment, and the organised power of the State, working ruthlessly in every department, regardless of the losses incurred by the taxpaying public, succeeded at length in breaking the strike after several weeks of
splendid resistance by men who only surrendered when hunger invaded their homes. This strike will be ever memorable for the false and inflammatory articles compiled for the purpose of inducing the country people to believe that the metropolis was in the hands of a revolutionary mob, capable of committing the most criminal excesses. These articles were published as full-page advertisements in the daily press at enormous cost, and even more viciously untrue advertisements appeared in many of the country newspapers. There can be no doubt that this scandalous expenditure of public money amounted to sheer bribery of the press to secure its whole-souled support of this unscrupulous Government of political desperadoes who displayed all the vices of bandits without their personal courage.

Hundreds of police were drafted into the city, and found nothing to do, while the sobriety and good order preserved by the men on strike were matters of general comment.

The promises made by the Government to the men that there would be no vindictiveness shown to them after the strike, and no victimisation of their leaders, have, like all their other pledges, been shamelessly broken from the day they were made right up to the present. The ruined homes, and famished wives and children still in our midst, bear eloquent testimony to the ruthless cruelty of the capitalistic system as administered by this Government, which is nothing more or less than a sub-committee of the Employers’ Federation. This experience also proved that State-owned and controlled public utilities, such as our Railway and Tramway services, our workshops, docks and other nationalised industries, offer no security for the rights of wage-earners employed in them. In fact, when controlled by a capitalistic Government they are more dangerous to democracy than those directly owned by private employers. Having all the organised instrumentalities of the State in their hands, and all the public funds and credit at their disposal, together with the vested interests of the more highly-paid employees on their side, such Governments hold greater means of exploiting, disciplining and defeating the workers than any combination of private employers can exercise. Under such circumstances the public services are run exclusively for the benefit of private capitalists to the detriment alike of the employees and the public. This does not prove that State ownership is in itself a failure, but demonstrates that without a complete democratic political control the extension of State ownership increases the danger of creating a “Servile State” instead of helping to build up a community of free citizens. Your Executive, therefore, considers it advisable for the Movement to earnestly discuss in Conference the failure of the wage-system and the whole capitalistic form of wealth-production for profit.

To work for this end would consolidate the Labor forces by eliminating the mere vote-catching element and would bring the Australian
Labor Movement into line with the most advanced thinkers among the organised workers of the world.

It is, of course, quite conceivable that such a course of action might estrange the less advanced section of our Movement, both inside and outside of Parliament, and might even result in a temporary setback to the work of capturing political power.

All members of the Movement who think deeply have, however, realised that political institutions are losing their hold upon the people, largely because of their ineffectiveness due to the lack of progressive ideals in our political parties. The want of ideals which appeal to the enthusiasm of the workers is responsible for the slow progress made, and the failure to hold permanently that which we gain. The concentration of effort upon the capture of the political machine has led to the neglect of educational work on Labor principles. This in turn has produced a perennial crop of political adventurers, who select from the platform proposals of local interest most calculated to catch votes, neglecting altogether the underlying principles which can alone make for the emancipation of the working classes and the ultimate triumph of the Labor Movement. It is, therefore, increasingly apparent that we must adopt a clear-cut policy, involving the abolition of the wage-system of Capitalism and the substitution of the collective ownership of land and the tools of production under democratic control.

Realising that as an Executive we have only the power of suggestion, it would nevertheless be a dereliction of duty to the Movement if we failed to indicate the conclusions drawn from experience, and therefore these ideas are commended to the earnest consideration of Conference.

**Sentences of Members of the IWW**

The Committee, having considered such evidence as has been placed before it with regard to the trial of the members of the IWW who were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and having carefully looked into the whole matter in all its bearings, is of opinion that it is useless to make any appeal to the present State Government, and that the only course is to put the Labor Party again in power, in order that it may appoint a Royal Commission, or some other impartial body, to review the evidence given at the trial.

**Labor Propaganda Work**

During the past year your Executive initiated a new departure of some importance, in holding Sunday afternoon Domain meetings for the advocacy of Labor principles, at which collections were taken up to defray expenses.

During the strike period these meetings were utilised to place the facts before the public in their true light, and the collections amounting
to some £1214/13/2 were devoted to the assistance of the wives and families of those deprived of employment.

Soon afterwards the second Conscription fight commenced, and our entire energies were devoted to the end of the year in combating the mischievous proposals of the Government, with what success is already on record. The public very liberally responded to the appeal for funds considering their impoverished circumstances, and the whole of the collections during this period were paid into the No-Conscription Campaign Funds.

We also instituted a system of Sunday evening lectures delivered in the IOOF Temple, Elizabeth-street, City. These have been interesting and instructive. Several members of your Executive, and members both of the Federal and State Parliamentary parties, have addressed appreciative, yet critical, audiences on a variety of subjects, all dealing with matters of the highest importance to the community. It will be seen by the following list that speakers have not been confined to those in the Movement, several University Professors having lectured on economics and kindred matters.

**Lectures, IOOF Temple**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 22</td>
<td>“Would Imperial Federation be in the Best Interests of Australian Democracy?”</td>
<td>A Rae</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>“The War and the Way Out”</td>
<td>AC Willis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 5</td>
<td>“Unification”</td>
<td>Senator Gardiner</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>“The Cost of Living”</td>
<td>JH Catts and D Guihen</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>“That Australia’s Prime Minister should be Australian born”</td>
<td>A Rae</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>“Should the Australian Labor Party Advocate Straight-out Socialism?”</td>
<td>WH Hutchison</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>“The Defence of Australia”</td>
<td>SA Rosa</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>“The Labor Movement and Its Relationship to Christianity”</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>“Co-operation”</td>
<td>JP Osborne</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>“The Australian Worker and His Attitude to Religion”</td>
<td>Rev. Portus</td>
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<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>“Persecution: The Parent of Progress”</td>
<td>GM Burns</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>“Should Land be Taxed Without Exemption?”</td>
<td>Senator J Grant</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>“The Wages System: Its Cause and Cure” Meredith Atkinson</td>
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<td>“Australian Writers”</td>
<td>Simon Hickey</td>
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We venture to say that the questions asked, and the discussions following, in which members of the audience joined, have been of great educational value to the Professors as well as the audiences.

These lectures should be made a regular feature of the Movement, and, if possible, extended beyond the city of Sydney. Intellectual food for thousands would be thus provided, and if generally attended by those who have the success of the Movement at heart, would soon become entirely self-supporting.

**Censorship**

It is regrettable that the censorship imposed by the Hughes Government upon both the spoken and the printed word has been, and still is, of the most severe and unjustifiable character. Such censorship was originally intended to prevent news from leaking out which might be of advantage to the enemy or of detriment to the Empire and the Allies. As a matter of fact these regulations have been applied with neither honest judgment nor justice. Matter published in one State has been forbidden in another. Books and papers published in England and circulating freely in the United Kingdom have been prohibited from entering the Commonwealth. Statements of opinion have been branded as lies and their repetition forbidden. Scores of persons have been fined heavily and some imprisoned as criminals for making statements the truth of which was beyond doubt, and which were not even alleged to have any bearing upon the war.

By a dragnet clause any statement displeasing to those in power could be declared by a mere police court magistrate or even a JP “prejudicial to recruiting” or “seditious” or “offensive to an Ally”, and by these means Freedom of Speech has ceased to exist in Australia.

This deliberate prostitution of war powers for party purposes has been frequently and flagrantly perpetrated by the Renegade Prime Minister. The boasted purity of our judiciary has been more than compromised by our sycophantic Magistracy and class-biased Judges.

The blatant Jingoism and class-conscious arrogance of these men, selected for their intellectual attainments and alleged high standards of integrity, were demonstrated beyond doubt. That they were prepared to sell and destroy the people is also beyond question. Like their prototype “Haman”, they failed, but time alone will tell whether their failure will preserve them from the same grim fate. That the high standards set by
Australia for her judiciary are not unattainable is splendidly exemplified by the few men who refused to degrade their high offices, notably Mr Justice Higgins, who did not hesitate to publicly denounce the intrusion of base political interference by the Prime Minister. The plutocratic newspapers loudly clamored for his removal from the bench. Much as the Government desired to follow the advice of the press, the public recognition of the unsullied reputation of this honorable Judge alone deterred the enemies of the people from attempting his impeachment.

**Imported Governors**

The present is an opportune time to comment upon the shameful partisanship of the present Governor-General of Australia. This politician arrived here during the artificial deadlock created by the Cook-Irvine Government in 1914 over the abolition of Preference to Unionists Bill. There was also a deadlock between the Senate and the House of Representatives over a bill for the Amendment of the Constitution. Where the two Houses disagree on any measure for the proposed amendment of the Constitution, the House passing the measure twice in succession has the right under the Constitution to submit the disputed proposals through the Governor-General direct to the people for their decision by Referendum. This is a valuable provision to prevent back-number politicians who have lost touch with the people from preventing the free expression of the will of the majority, and the Governor-General is morally, if not technically, bound to submit the measure on his own prerogative irrespective of the advice of his Ministers.

The Governor-General (Munro Ferguson) granted without demur the double dissolution asked for by Mr Cook, the then Prime Minister, with a majority of only one in the House of 75, but refused to submit to the people the bill passed by the Senate, at the request of a majority of 22 in a House of 36. This did not affect the Senators, but deprived the people of a right conferred upon them by the Constitution, and was therefore a distinctly reactionary misuse of his powers, and which he would have scarcely dared attempt had there been any democratic checks available.

The next occasion on which he exhibited his strong bias was when WM Hughes broke away from the Labor Party, and then resigned office to get clear of his old colleagues and party obligations. He advised the Governor-General to commission him to form a new Ministry, and this the Governor-General at once did, although Hughes had only 13 followers in a House of 75.

On the occasion of the recent Referendum, it will be remembered Mr Hughes again and again pledged himself not to remain in office if Conscription was not carried. All his colleagues concurred in this pledge, some of them emphatically endorsing it by further pledges of their own. The whole National Party also concurred, not one of them raising any objection to their leader’s attitude. Mr Hughes, craftily waiting long after
the result was beyond all doubt, at length handed in a bogus resignation, first getting himself re-elected Leader of his Party and then engineering through another resolution pledging the whole National Party to keep the Labor Party out of office at all costs. The Governor-General went through the transparent farce of asking several politicians, including Mr Tudor, to consult with him, and ended up by sending for Hughes to again form a Ministry. This he did by reappointing everyone to their old offices, to which they still hang with limpet-like tenacity.

Thus once again the Governor-General has demonstrated the fact that the human species known as ‘Rat Politicus’, is very dear to his Tory heart. Whether it is a lonesome navigator like Mr Cook, struggling along with a miserable majority of one, or WM Hughes scuttling away with a still more miserable minority of thirteen, or the same Hughes crawling back beaten and dismayed, with a following only a little less perfidious than himself. This British Tory partisan insults the common sense of the people of Australia by his acquiescence in every suggestion emanating from those who are desirous of preventing the expression of the will of Democracy. We do not recommend any severer treatment than sending him back to his native heather, but in sterner and simpler times rulers’ heads have been stuck on pikes for lighter offences.

Cypress

Among matters to be deeply regretted are the deaths which occurred during the year of Mr Thos Thrower, Labor MLA for Macquarie, and Alderman Denis Guihen, of the Sydney Municipal Council, and for many years a member of the Party Executive. Both these comrades died while their ages gave promise of many years of vigorous manhood and future service to the Movement. Mr Thrower had, by his abilities, won for himself a reputation in Parliament and served as Chairman of Committees for some time with considerable credit to himself and impartiality to all. Alderman Guihen was a man of great debating powers and keen intellect. He had unrivalled tenacity of purpose and the courage to maintain, when once formed, his opinions against overwhelming odds. These qualities won for him the respect both of friends and foes, and his untimely end is a great loss to the Labor Movement.

Finance

Including the sum of £971/16/3 brought forward from 1916, the total receipts from all sources for the year ending 31st December, 1917, were £17,594 19 4

And the total expenditure for the same period 16,233 15 1

Leaving a Balance of 1 1361 1 2

Included in the total receipts is the sum of £32/4/2, balance of No.2 account, transferred to current account.
The financial statement is often regarded as the barometer of an organisation. The growth of the Labor Movement since its repudiation of Hughes, Holman and their immediate followers has been more or less apparent to all. Your Executive is proud to be able to present such tangible evidence of its activities as that borne out by the great expanse of its finances. A few years ago the average revenue was some £1200 per annum, and members of our organisation may well be surprised to note that the year 1917 closed with a total revenue of £17,594/19/4.

Restoration of confidence and the brutal and barbarous reactionary policies of our opponents led by the ex-Labor men, Hughes and Holman, were the great factors which led to this wonderful result.

**Executive Attendances**

Your Executive having only taken office in June, and the year closing in December, it has been considered inadvisable to prepare a table of attendance for this short period. A full report will be made up to date of meeting and duly presented to the Conference.

**New Branches Endorsed for the Period**

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<th>Name of Branch</th>
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In presenting this, our 14th Annual Report, it is pleasing to state that the enthusiasm and sincerity which has marked our organisation in past years has been maintained in the year just closed.

A heavy call was made on members as the result of the two elections (Federal and State) being held during the year, and a further call was made on the organisation by the No-Conscription campaign which has just been so successfully concluded.

The women of your committee spared no efforts in this trying time in helping to once again place our Party in power, and although not successful on the occasion of the State and Federal elections, we are more determined than ever to work on until we have accomplished our purpose.

Our Annual Meeting and Election of Officers was held as usual in the month of December, and resulted as follows:-

President, Miss May Matthews.
Vice-Presidents, Mesdames K Dwyer, C Fox, E Maincke, Greville, Roach, Bolle.
Secretary, Mrs EM Seery. Treasurer, Mrs C Mason. Press Secretary, Mrs Lalor.
Auditors, Mesdames Roach and Kirwin.

Mrs K Dwyer, who has been president of the committee since its formation, did not stand for election as president this year, having decided to take a short rest from political work. Our committee has placed on record its appreciation of the valuable work done on behalf of women by Mrs Dwyer during her term of office.
**Representation**

The following Leagues and Unions are at present represented on committee by a full representation of five Delegates from each:

Alexandria       Randwick
Darlinghurst     Annandale
Redfern          Mortdale
Forest Lodge     Waverley
King             Belmore No.1.
Rozelle          Paddington
Bondi            St Peters
Golden Grove     Waterloo
Darling Harbor   Glebe
Kensington       Surry Hills
Lilyfield        Ashfield
Bexley           Leichhardt
Willoughby       Newtown
Belmore No.2     Mascot
Petersham

**Unions**

- Women Workers
- Miscellaneous Workers
- Waitresses

**Federal and State Elections**

At both Federal and State elections members gave valuable assistance, many members devoting their whole time to country organising work. It is our deep regret that we were unable to secure a majority for Labor on this occasion; this, however, is accounted for to a very great extent by the unsatisfactory state in which we found the rolls. Reports have been received from all quarters of the great number of people who found themselves disfranchised on election day. This state of things we are trying to remedy in our organising work. We are also hopeful to be able to financially assist in the next campaign, as we recognise that greater effort will be necessary to combat our opponents in the future.

Two women were endorsed by the Executive to contest Federal seats – Mrs EM Seery (Robertson) and Mrs H Greville (Wentworth) – thus giving practical effect to that part of the Platform that says: “Full Citizen Rights for Women”.

In this regard it is worthy of note that the Labor Party were the first Party in Australia to make this forward step. We are gratified at the splendid vote polled by both women candidates, and as problems which will have to be faced as a result of the war will greatly affect women and
children, we are hopeful that in the near future women will be found in their place in the Federal Parliament.

By-Elections
Two State by-elections were held during the year — Macquarie and The Murray. Two of our members were sent to take part in the campaign. Assistance was also given in the municipal and by-elections which were recently held.

No-Conscription
When it became known that the Federal Government had decided to take another referendum on the question of conscripting the manhood of Australia for overseas service, our women threw themselves wholeheartedly into the fight in order to assist to defeat the proposal. A committee was formed, to which all friends and sympathisers were invited. Mr J Bailey, Mr E Riley, MHR, Mr PC Evans, and Mr A Rae attended the initial meeting, and gave addresses on the plan of campaign.

Throughout the campaign our women worked unceasingly and untiring in their efforts to have a negative vote carried, and a full measure of credit must be given to the women for the wonderful vote put up for ‘No’ in New South Wales. Fifteen of our members devoted themselves exclusively to country work.

Finance
In order to raise a fund to assist in future organising work it has been decided to have several social functions during the winter months, also to have a bazaar at the end of the present year.

During the year just closed little was done with regard to finance, as we were engaged in a more serious work of assisting at the elections, also in the No-Conscription campaign. We, however, had sufficient funds as shown by our balance-sheet.

Political Organising
It is well here to state that as a result of the conscription campaign we lost quite a number of our members; we had therefore to appeal to the Leagues and Unions to fill the gap so caused, with a result that they have been replaced by a number of willing and enthusiastic members. In order to educate new members classes have been formed for the study of Economics, the debating class has been re-formed and sub-committees formed to get all possible information on those Planks of the Platform dealing with health, education, cost of living, and Municipal and Local Government. Committee was requested to send two Delegates on to the Organising Committee of the Executive. Mesdames Dwyer and Seery were elected to the position, with Mesdames Benson and Fox as alternates.
Industrial Organising

The organising of women workers has been steadily proceeded with during the year. The Women Workers’ Union, which was formed by committee, has now three sections of the organisation covered by an award, and a fourth (the Milliners) is now before the Court. We have in hand the work of organising the Hat and Cap Makers; this work is entrusted to Mrs Maincke. We are also organising Handkerchief, Tie and Art Needle Workers. Mrs Kirwin and Mrs Seery have this work in hand.

Obituary

We deeply regret to state that during the year death claimed two of our most valued workers – Mrs E Conway and Mrs E Braddick. Both women had for many years been delegates to the Annual Conference, and were amongst the original members and office-bearers of the now prosperous Women Workers’ Union. Our Movement is indeed poorer by the loss of such devoted workers.

May Matthews, President
Eva M Seery, Hon. Secretary

Balance Sheet, Year Ending December, 1917

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(Signed) (Mrs) C Fox, Vice-President
(Mrs) C Mason, Treasurer
Audited and found correct,
(Mrs) M Roach, Auditor
Annual Conference of ALP, NSW Branch, 1918

(The Australian Worker, 6, 13, 20, 27 June 1918)

Day 1, Saturday, 1 June 1918

NSW Labor in Conference. President Reviews Situation.
Labor Will Declare its Attitude on War.
The Recent Strike and Conscription.

Some 200 delegates took their seats in the large Social Hall at the Sydney Trades Hall last Saturday afternoon, when the President of the Australian Labor Party (State of New South Wales) declared the Annual Conference open for business. One of the most significant announcements made by the President was that Labor's attitude in the war would be declared definitely before the Conference was brought to a close.

Over a hundred delegates were present, representing various trade unions, while nearly 100 branches of the various ALP Leagues also sent delegates.

No time was lost in getting to business and within five minutes of starting time the President was delivering his annual address as follows:-

Strenuous Times

Since the last Conference in 1917 and during the past 12 months the Labor Movement in Australia has passed through a strenuous and critical time, and was again called upon to put up a fight for the liberties and rights of the working class, and also a fight for its existence as a Labor Movement. The Movement and liberties of the people have been assailed from all sides in the most unscrupulous way by the combined forces of so-called Nationalists and the capitalist employers, and by their servants, the Holman-Beeby Government and the Hughes-Cook Federal Government.

The Strike

As part of the attack on the Movement, the great strike of 1917 was a deliberately engineered trap on the part of the employers and State and
Federal Governments, and was calculated to weaken and destroy the trade unions, and was launched at a time when hundreds of thousands of members of those unions were fighting in France. While the employers and capitalist Governments were exhorting the unionists to enlist for military service abroad on the grounds that they were required to fight for their liberties and freedom, these very same people were secretly and silently plotting to take those liberties away, and when they thought they had a sufficient number of unionists shipped from the shores of Australia, the psychological moment arrived, they sprang upon us the big strike with all the venom of their class.

This was base treachery to the men at the Front; as before the men agreed to leave here they exacted and obtained a pledge from the Holman and Hughes Governments to the effect that their industrial rights and working conditions would not be assailed or interfered with during the period of the war. It is now only too well known by the people generally how these rights and liberties have been attacked, and that many of them have been utterly destroyed for the time being. Unions have been deregistered in a wholesale manner, and many of them on the most flimsy and despotic grounds. Wages have been cut down right and left, working conditions which were fought for and won by the workers have been ruthlessly taken away and destroyed. Awards have been deliberately flouted and avoided in every way by both the Governments and the employers; thousands of unionists have been persecuted and victimised, and their homes broken up and scattered to the winds. Labor men and unionists have been seized under all kinds of flimsy pretexts and trumped-up excuses, and in numbers of cases arbitrarily put into prison without trials by the courts.

**Free Speech**

Deliberate and concerted attempts have and are being made to destroy the right of free speech, and Labor men have been prosecuted and persecuted for speaking the truth to the people, and for championing the rights of the workers. It is now practically impossible for a Labor man to make a speech in advocacy of the great Cause without prosecution. In this way the Hughes-Cook Government and the Holman State Government are deliberately using the war and the infamous War Precautions Act for political purposes, and for their own aggrandisement and as a means of crushing the unions.

**Conscription**

The great strike was precipitated on the people as a preliminary to the attempts to bring in conscript slavery. It was used for the purpose of weakening organised Labor, and to pave the way for the introduction
and bludgeoning through of the slavery. Notwithstanding the pledge given the Hughes-Cook Government and the State Nationalists at the last Federal election that conscription was dead and that if returned to power no attempt would be made to reintroduce it, and that the verdict of the people in 1916 would be respected, immediately they were returned to power they deliberately threw their pledges to the winds and launched another conscription campaign using the most ruthless and despotic methods in their endeavours to carry it through. The aid of the capitalistic press and the full forces of the machinery of the State and militarism and the pulpit were invoked and used to the fullest extent in order to ensure their success.

But notwithstanding this, the Movement and the people realised that the whole of their liberties were at stake, and they rose to the occasion and defeated the hellish scheme by an overwhelming majority. During the campaign the Labor Movement and its supporters and all anti-conscriptionists were branded as pro-German, and lying statements were made everywhere to the effect that we were receiving German gold. I must take the opportunity here to throw that lie back in their teeth. Your Executive spared no efforts to defeat the whole vile scheme, and organised far and away the most formidable scheme ever carried out in Australia or any part of the world against it.

**Economic Conscription**

Being defeated in their conscription plot by way of revenge on the people, the Hughes Government, with the assistance of all the State Governments, excepting the Queensland Labor Government (great cheering), resorted to the vile method of economic conscription. To give effect to this scheme the Governments mentioned have adopted a policy of paralysis of all industry where possible in order to force all eligible men out of employment and through economic pressure drive them into military service abroad.

**Holman's Secret Document**

As conclusive evidence of this we have now famous “secret memorandum” which was luckily unearthed and used to such good effect during the last no-conscription campaign in 1917. This document revealed a most diabolical and unscrupulous plot between the Holman-Beeby Government and the Federal Government and the capitalists against the rights of the workers, and laid down methods by which it was proposed to starve all men of military age in Australia into military service abroad and force them to leave Australia against their will. Never before was such a brutal scheme hatched by a gang of capitalistic disciples against a people.
**Vitality and Progress of the Movement**

Our enemies told us that the Labor Movement was done when the traitors from within were outed. They said we had fired out the brains of the Movement. I am happy to say that their prophecy has never come true. The Movement was never as sound as it is today. We have many more branches than at any previous date, and thrice as many unions affiliated as formerly. As an illustration of the soundness and enthusiasm of the Movement, it may be mentioned that during the past 12 months your Executive has had a turnover in revenue of about £17,000 more than the Movement received during the previous 15 years.

The Executive also instituted a scheme of propaganda in Sydney and suburbs, meetings are held in the Domain every Sunday, and Sunday night lectures are held in the IOOF Hall (Sydney). This has assisted the revenue as well as spreading the principles of the Movement. The Executive had also instituted a comprehensive scheme of country organising, and the machinery for this has been created and a start made to carry it through and perfect the organisation for the next campaign. Notwithstanding a few complaints over minor matters, the Executive has carried out its duties to the Movement and stood solid by its principles and has not budged an inch.

**Present Conference Important**

This Conference is at least as important as any held in the State. It meets at a time of great importance to the Movement – when so much secret service money is flying round – and will be called upon to deal with matters of vital importance. I trust its deliberations will be of lasting and great good to the people of Australia and the workers throughout the civilised world.

**Labor and the War**

Delegates will be asked to declare Labor’s attitude to the war. It will be necessary for the guidance of the Movement that Conference should do so. As the war goes on circumstances and conditions alter, and what was good for the Movement twelve months ago may not be good today.

**Beginning of Business**

Alderman Farrell (Darlinghurst) moved for the admission of the press. If they were excluded, reports would get out, and would appear in the newspapers in a garbled manner. If any false statement appeared, if the press was admitted, they had their remedy.
Mr J Andrews (AWU) opposed the motion in a vigorous manner. He contended that the press gave garbled reports of Labor’s activities, and should not be admitted. He moved as an amendment the exclusion of the press other than the official Labor press.

Mr Cecil Last (AWU) supported Mr Andrews and illustrated the manner in which they (the paid press) were conducting the Upper Hunter election. The press men had to do the bidding of their capitalistic bosses, and should not be allowed to remain at the Conference for a minute. JC Watson always took up the attitude that they should never give their enemies a stick with which they could be flogged afterwards.

Mr Morby (Furniture Trades) was subjected to some heckling when he rose to support Alderman Farrell’s motion. He said that with the presence of the public, and if one was excluded so should the other. There was nothing to prevent anybody taking shorthand notes in the meeting. If we were to discuss great matters there was nothing to be afraid of, and he contended the press should be allowed to remain. He had nothing to be ashamed of.

Mr SA Rosa (Mosman) moved as an addendum that all matters relating to the recruiting be discussed in committee. In this way both the press and the public would be excluded from all debates relating to the war and it was important that these matters should not be discussed openly.

Mr Farrell accepted the addendum which was carried by 93 to 31, Mr Andrews’s amendment being lost by 82 to 53.

Unions and Political Dues
A letter was received from Mr Beeby (Minister for Labor and Industry) to the effect that in no sense would the 1918 Industrial Act be retrospective in its operations regarding the payment by unions of any political dues that were payable in advance of the passage of the Act. It seemed fair that unions should be given a reasonable time to amend their rules in order to comply with the Act. The President said that this letter assured unions that they could be fully credentialed provided they paid their dues.

Appointment of Committees
Mr Cecil Last (AWU) was appointed minute secretary, Miss May Matthews (Darlinghurst) and Mr Lynch timekeepers, and Mr Meston doorkeeper, Messrs Farrell, Bramston, Chambers and Rae were appointed credential committee; while Messrs O’Halloran, Treflé, Macartney, Iceton and Mrs Seery comprised the agenda committee.

A short discussion took place on the matter of delegates to the Interstate Conference, opening at Perth on June 17 next. For this conference, Messrs P Adler, J Graves, G Sutherland, AC Willis, Arthur Rae and Miss
May Matthews had been appointed by the 1917 State Conference. It was eventually decided that the matter of either confirming or altering the personnel of the delegation should stand over until Federal business was dealt with.

**Evening Session**

After the tea adjournment some time was taken up in discussing amendments to the Standing Orders. One delegate wanted the time of reply to motions extended to five minutes instead of two, but was defeated. Mr O’Brien (Musicians) wanted a motion that no person other than a delegate be allowed to address the Conference except by unanimous consent. Mr Saunders (Milk and Ice Carters) suggested a two-thirds majority for consent. Mr O’Brien, who was asked from all parts of the hall whether he was afraid of Mr Judd (who it was rumoured would ask permission to address Conference), consented to Mr Saunders’ amendment, but the motion was ruled out of order. Mr O’Brien then moved that motions for adjournment be put without discussion of any kind. Carried by 70 to 43. Another motion by Mr O’Brien that any extension of time granted a speaker be added to the time limit of debates, was ruled out. Still another motion by Mr O’Brien that no smoking be allowed in Conference was ruled out, but the President hoped that delegates would use their good taste and refrain from smoking during the sessions.

The time limit of Conference was limited to 14 days – all business to be discharged from the business paper still standing at the end of the 14 days. The annual report and balance sheet were distributed and on the suggestion of Mr Catts, MHR, it was decided that discussion on them be the business for Wednesday night (June 5).

After some discussion it was decided that all war business would commence on Monday (June 3) in committee. The committee appointed for the purpose had arrived at certain decisions and these would be circulated to delegates in order that they may be fully acquainted with what was being done.

**Recall of Parliamentary Members**

Mr Bullin moved No 207 of the business paper – “That this Conference urges the institution of the Recall system for members of Parliament, and all public elective offices”. He said this was the only manner in which they could control their representatives. He suggested that the Federal candidates at the next election should be asked to pledge themselves to this course.

Mr Donovan said the matter should be given deep thought. If it became law there was nothing to prevent Liberals recalling a Labor man,
deplete the Labor funds, and possibly defeat the Labor representative. Mr O'Dea (Shop Assistants) supported the resolution, and said that if it had been in operation at the last strike Attorney-General Hall, instead of being in America today, would have been looking for a job. The same applied to other politicians. He instanced the fact that Edden (Nationalist member and an old ex-miner) was absent from Parliament when the safety clause had been taken out of the Miners’ Bill. Had the Recall been in operation, Kahibah would have had a mining man representing them today instead of a man like Edden, who had proved false to them at a time when he was most needed. Likewise, Hughes would not have been in London today were the Recall in operation.

Mr Burke opposed the motion, saying that if the Recall was to be used by Labor men against Liberals, it would also be used by Liberals against Labor men. Moreover, it would be a difficult thing to get people to sign a petition for Recall, and would cost a lot of money to do so. The proper course was to turn the “rats” out at election time.

After considerable discussion Mr Evans (General Secretary) moved: “That Initiative, Recall and Referendum be embodied in the Labor platform”. This was carried unanimously. An amendment by Mr Hutchinson to include the words “and Federal and State Statutes” was lost.

**Australian Born Prime Minister**

Mr Cleary (Yass) moved motion No 169 – “That no person be eligible to become Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia unless he be Australian born”. He contended that reliance could not be placed on imported men. Mr Lazzarini, MLA (Marrickville) opposed the motion. He was proud of the fact that he was an Australian, but said that if we extended the hand of friendship to people from other countries we should give them the full rights of citizenship. He gave instances of how Australians had become Prime Ministers, and said that if Australians could not rise to the top in a country where every opportunity offered, that was their own fault. We should take a broad view of the matter, and shouldn’t say that because a few traitors in the Movement came from overseas, everybody should be condemned.

Mr Lynch said we were committed to the cultivation of an Australian sentiment, and this was the first step towards that end. We had too much Imperialism in the country already. We should make Australia a paragon and beacon light for the rest of the world to follow. Our first step should be the National sentiment, then the International sentiment afterwards. (Dissent.) When we had made Australia a paradise we could then send our emissaries to other countries. He believed in “Australia First” always.

Mr Cody was of the opinion that no discrimination should be used. If only an Australian-born could be a Prime Minister, then only an Australian-born should be President of the ALP. There were many
Australians in the present Federal Cabinet, and their sentiments were no different to those of the imported man. If they commenced to sort out men in this manner, they should have an all-Australian Labor Movement and comb all people, other than Australians, out of the Movement.

**Wanted, a Strong Australian Sentiment**

Mr JH Catts, MHR, supported the motion. In a vigorous speech, he urged the cultivation of a good strong, rousing Australian sentiment. The people who talked about Internationalism were people who owned no country. He instanced the fact that the Interstate Commission discovered that Australian-made boots could not be sold without putting foreign brands on them. There was not enough Australian sentiment in the country. He objected to a Prime Minister insulting the democracy of Australia by saying “Wales for ever best”. There were people in this country prepared to tear down the Australian flag to put up the British flag. The British coat-of-arms appeared on the Government “Gazettes” and on “Hansard,” instead of the Australian coat-of-arms. The Labor Government had adopted an Australian stamp, and immediately the anti-Australian Government got into power they had substituted a stamp with the King’s head on it. This was done in order to show us that we were still under Imperial domination. In America the President had to be an American born, and if that was good enough for one hundred million people it was good enough for us to take up a like attitude.

Mr J Power, in a lengthy speech, opposed the motion as being foreign to the spirit of the Movement. He said that flags had been the curse of all countries of the world, and didn’t assist the workers in any way. The Labor Movement should be entirely opposed to a motion of this kind. If Australians could not get the highest positions in the land it clearly showed that they were not worthy of them.

Eventually the motion was defeated by 95 votes to 46, and Conference adjourned till Monday morning (June 3).

**Day 2, Monday, 3 June 1918**

**Unions Unable to Affiliate**

Considerable time on Monday morning last was devoted to the matter of unions unable to pay their affiliation fees because of the recent strike. The Sydney Coal Lumpers’ Union wrote that it was unable to send delegates because of its inability to pay its affiliation but guaranteed to pay same as early as possible. The General Secretary (Mr PC Evans) said there was no better organisation than the Coal Lumpers, and he moved that badges be
issued. Mr AC Willis (Coal and Shale Employees) intimated that his organisation – as a fellow sufferer in the strike – was prepared to guarantee the fees of the Coal Lumpers’ Union provided they were given representation on Conference. It was decided on the voices to issue badges to the organisation. The Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Association was another union placed in the same way. It also had been hard hit by the recent strike, and had been forced to sell some of its union belongings to other unions to keep going. It was also decided to admit delegates of this organisation – the fees to be paid at a later date.

**Returned Soldiers and Politics**

An animated discussion took place on the proposal to allow affiliation of the Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Political League. The Executive had recommended that the League be given affiliation, and that two delegates be allowed to sit on Conference. Mr CC Lazzarini, MLA, opposed the recommendation, and stated that no special affiliation should be granted. If the returned soldiers were not members of unions they should be members of leagues. Special affiliation opened the way to intrigue, and would allow the League to pack leagues in order to get representation in Parliament.

Alderman O’Hara (Paddington) took much the same view, and said that sufficient scope existed in the Labor Movement as at present constituted for all returned soldiers to obtain their rights.

Mr A Rae (AWU) supported the motion. He said that full consideration had been given to the matter by the select committee appointed and he was of the opinion that the Labor Party needed the support of the League in order that the returned men might secure full justice. Answering Mr Lazzarini, he asked why should any politician be afraid to meet anybody in open selection? It was only looking at the matter from a Parliamentary candidate’s view and not from the view of the Movement. Many of the Returned Soldiers’ Leagues [had members] who had not been good Labor men and a special effort should be made to get them interested. The constitution of their organisation was anti-militaristic and against anything favouring the creation of a military caste. The Nationalist Party was trying all it knew how to rake them into the Nationalist Movement, and spending much money towards that end. He considered it would be suicidal to refuse them.

Mr Pullen (Middle Harbour) said he did not regard the returned men as soldiers. They were merely members of the working class in uniform for the time being. They might be misrepresented or misled or might have had their legs pulled in order to get into uniform, but what the Conference should think about was how best to help them as members of the working class.
Mr A Rutherford (Saddlers’ Union) opposed the motion and, characterised the idea of special affiliation as sentimental. There was after all, no difference between the returned soldiers and the men who did not go to the war. The leagues and unions were open to them to join if they so wished, and he was opposed to any special privileges being given to men returned from the war. The war would come and go, but the Labor Party would remain and those who were Labor before the war would be Labor when it was over.

A Returned Soldier’s View

Corporal Murphy (St Leonards) was received with great applause as he rose to address the Conference from the platform. He was surprised at the remarks of delegates opposed to the motion. While they did not claim special privileges, they certainly thought that the adaptation and environment of war had altered their conditions. Thousands of men and boys would return maimed and wounded, and something would have to be done by the boys themselves to protect their own interests. He claimed that the men who went away were entitled to the support and assistance of the Labor Movement. The Movement had been glad of their assistance during the recent anti-conscription campaign – (applause) – when many of the returned soldiers went on the platform at a time when they were not fit to do so. All knew that the returned men carried a lot of weight in the campaign, since they had seen the evils of the system and could speak from first-hand knowledge. Every political party was prepared to promise them things, but unless they were in a political party in a body themselves they had no means of getting the full justice they were entitled to. The Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Imperial League was a branch of the Nationalist Party, and supported by the Government. The Returned Soldiers’ League was purely a Labor organisation and every man was a pledged Labor man. They were not out to seek selection in any Parliamentary campaign – rule 18 prevented them doing this. Even if Conference turned their application for affiliation down they would still continue to be good Labor men. They were not “flag-flapping enthusiasts”, but all good Labor men, and he had to tell them that the party that got the support of the genuine returned men would win in the end. They should be given admission, which would allow them to rope in as many as they could for the Labor Movement, and at the same time get justice for the boys when they returned from the Front.

The motion to grant affiliation was carried by 118 to 29.
Recruiting and War Matters

The President announced that the next business would be the consideration of war matters, and that in accordance with a motion passed last Saturday the press and public would be asked to retire. The rest of the day was then devoted to a discussion, in committee, of a resolution that had been drawn up by a special committee appointed to deal with war matters.

At noon on Monday June 3, the NSW annual Labor Conference went into committee to discuss matters relating to the war and recruiting. The discussions were continued in camera until after 10 o’clock last Saturday night, when it was decided that nothing could be made public until the decisions arrived at were confirmed by the Interstate Conference, which opens at Perth (WA) next Monday.

Election of Officials

The following official appointments have been made for the ensuing year: President, Mr WH Lambert; vice-presidents Messrs John Bailey and AC Willis; Interstate Executive, Messrs JM Power and AC Willis; general secretary, Mr PC Evans; delegates to Interstate Conference, Messrs Arthur Rae, AC Willis, JM Power, JH Catts, MHR, G Sutherland and TD Mutch, MLA.

For the State Executive the following were elected: Messrs P Adler, J Andrews, T Arthur, GC Bodkin, RW Bramston, J Cullinan, H Denford, J Farrell, JS Garden, J Guest, C Hogan, W Hutchinson, J Kearney, C Last, J Lynch, G McCarthy, C Murphy, WP O‘Connor, RTD O’Halloran, LJ O’Hara, W Peat, J Power, E Riley, SA Rosa, A Rutherford, G Sutherland, TJ Swiney, CB Treflé, Mrs Bailey and Miss Matthews.

The following were elected as alternate delegates for the ALP Executive: Messrs Berry, Breen, Bourke, Connelly, Chambers, Carey, Corrish, Clyne, Falvey, Fitzgerald, Graves, Ivey, McLelland, McPherson, McPhee, O’Dea, Potter, Scott, Campbell, Thompson, Vernon, Wallace, Weston, Mesdames Benson, Bodkin, Charles, Greville, Mortimore, and Toohey, and Misses O’Sullivan and Trussell.

Days 3-7, Tuesday-Saturday, 4-8 June 1918

[Almost the whole of this week was taken up with discussion of Labor policy on war, peace and conscription, to be taken to the Federal Conference of the ALP. The basis for discussion was the policy document drafted for the previous State Conference in 1917. This can be found above in the Executive Report presented to Conference. The Australian Worker observed the in camera provisions strictly, so there is no report for those days. At the end of the Conference the}
Daily Telegraph (20 June 1918) gave a summary of the conclusions of the debate, which is presented here.

**Startling Proposals. Labor Conference and War. Democratic Defence. Peace Suggestions**

A number of startling war proposals were placed before delegates during the recent Labor Conference in Sydney, of which a large portion was adopted. All the matters in reference to the war, recruiting, and defence were discussed in camera. The amended proposals have been forwarded to the Inter-State Labor Conference in Perth, and those in reference to the question of the defence of Australia are, it is understood, being sent on, without debate here, in order that they may there be decided.

Certain of the suggestions are essentially of a Federal character, and doubtless the Conference considered it unnecessary to deal with them in the State gathering. Among these were the following proposals concerning defence prepared by a committee:

- That as Australia was unique in her isolation and immense area, compared with population, the only reliable defence for her must be local. To that end were recommended a fully equipped arsenal; fortification of coastal towns and cities; a fleet of submarines; aerodromes on the coastline; works for the construction of aircraft; the encouragement of rifle clubs; the military training of manhood; the establishment of essential industries; and attractive economic and political conditions.

**Defence and Democracy**

Suggestions in regard to amending the Defence Act were also prepared, but not carried precisely in their original form. The suggestions included:

- To democratise the Defence Act it should provide: An appeal from courts-martial to the civil courts; officers elected from qualified men by the subordinate ranks; officers to have served in the ranks; optional salute; officers and men to mess together; trainees and citizen forces to have the custody of their arms; age of compulsory training raised to 18 years, with provision for conscientious objectors.

**"Suppression" of the War**

The attitude of the Labor movement in reference to the war and recruiting were naturally matters for State consideration, and were discussed at length. The proposals were not passed without alteration, but as they appeared at one stage of the Conference they contained a declaration and three conclusions, one of which, it is stated, was not adopted. The declaration and conclusions were, in brief:
That a year ago the party had adopted proposals which sought to secure peace by negotiation. These had been generally approved in Great Britain, America, and other English-speaking communities. As the Federal Government had taken no steps to bring them before the imperial Government, but had been hostile to suggestions for peace, and had endeavored to suppress them, and as Great Britain and her Allies and the Central Powers seemed “equally determined” to continue the conflict, and as the slaughter policy threatened to destroy the fruits of white civilisation, the workers here and in other lands were advised to unite for its immediate suppression.

Realising that, whatever the immediate causes of the war may have been, that its fundamental origin is economic, and that racial animosities are subsidiary causes, fostered and exploited by the military and ruling classes, we are less concerned with apportioning the blame for the outbreak of the conflagration than with the need for its immediate suppression.

Peace by Conference

Free discussion of the war and other vital problems had been prevented by the press censorship and the application of despotic powers by the Government, and it became the duty of the party to disregard unjust and tyrannical restrictions, and to proclaim its message to the people everywhere.

After referring to the conditions in Russia, Finland, and the Ukraine Republic, which it is contended, offer no analogy to the position of Great Britain and her Allies, the proposals proceeded:—“If an honorable and equitable peace were agreed upon in conference, the armies of all the powers concerned would be gradually and simultaneously demobilised, and no nation would be able to dominate or terrorise another. Failing agreement by conference, hostilities could be resumed, although such a calamitous contingency would be unlikely”.

Defence Neglected

Australia was the most easily defended great country in the world; her defence had been scandalously neglected; the danger grew greater day by day; yet the “conspiracy of silence” among her rulers and the press was ominous, and already preparations would only be just in time to avert disaster.

The Government measured Australian interests with “the yard-stick of the British merchant”, and had made it a penal offence to advise stopping the “stampede” of recruits; local defence practicable, immediate and imperative, and not contingent upon the naval supremacy of Great Britain in the North Sea; Australia’s population depleted by her share in the war, and her financial burdens so heavy that her existence was in jeopardy.
Against Service Abroad

The conclusions set out in the proposals were as follow:

“Taking these facts in conjunction with our Government’s refusal to negotiate for peace, this Conference therefore declares:

(a) That the policy of the Australian Labor Party is opposed to any men in future leaving Australia for military service abroad.

(b) That, failing the consent of the Imperial authorities to at once open up negotiations for peace, the Australian divisions on service abroad be brought back to Australia.

(c) That we call upon the organised workers of every country engaged in the war to take similar action.”

Of these, it is understood, one was rejected.

Secretary’s Remarks

The secretary of the ALP (Mr Evans) last night declined to discuss the matter, except to make a general statement.

“Certain important proposals”, he said, “were submitted to the Labor Conference in rough draft. Some were greatly altered, and some of the measures which it has been inferred in some quarters were carried were not even discussed – such, for example, as the ‘defence of Australia’ and other equally important matters.”

“It was well known”, he added, “that the war and its conduct were absolutely a Federal matter, and therefore the policy of the Labor movement in this regard could only be determined by the Australian Labor Conference, and this was now sitting at Perth”.

Day 8, Monday, 10 June 1918

Deregistered Unions

Although the Agenda Committee had recommended that country matters be discussed on Monday night, no sooner had delegates taken their seat than Mr Claude Thompson (Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Association) secured the suspension of the standing orders to discuss the matter of the deregistered unions. He said that as the Parliamentary Labor Party would be meeting the following day (Tuesday) it was necessary that a recommendation from Conference should be placed before them regarding this matter. He said that 29 unions (comprising 85,000 men) had been deregistered as a result of the last strike, and while it was promised at the Recruiting Conference that these
unions were to be reregistered, only 17 were to be so treated. He moved
the following resolution:

“Whereas 29 industrial unions, with an aggregate membership of
85,000 have been deregistered, and a number of bogus unions – creatures
of the boss – planted in various industries; and whereas the Holman
Government, without bargaining, definitely, unreservedly, and without
qualification, expressed or implied, promised to register all the deregis-
tered unions by special Act; and whereas the Holman Government has
publicly declared its intention of reregistering 17 unions only, and basely
abandoning 12 unions, with an aggregate of 41,000 members, thus
repudiating its promises; and whereas all the unions associated with the
big strike of 1917 were pledged to stand or fall together, and as it is an
accepted principle of union solidarity that an injury to one is an injury to
to all, this Conference of the ALP therefore resolves –

“(a) That the State Parliamentary Labor Party be requested to put up the
fight of its life in opposition to invidious discrimination between unions
and to urge upon the House and country the policy of one in all in, or one
out all out.

“(b) That the 17 Unions especially singled out for favouritism be requested,
individually and through the Labor Council, to refuse registration unless all
the deregistered unions are included in the special Act.

“(c) That a committee of five and the mover (six altogether) be appointed
by Conference to take all the necessary steps to ensure the proper carrying
out of the objects of this resolution.”

At the commencement of the strike every man had pledged himself to
stand or fall by the result. If any justice was to be done to the unions
deregistered as a result of the strike, it was a remarkable thing that two
of the unions mainly responsible for the strike were to be reregistered
while some twelve, who simply fell into line to preserve solidarity, were
left out. The latter were in the peculiar position that they could not get
Federal registration while those offered registration could. He claimed
that if one union was to be registered the lot should. None were more
guilty than others. His organisation had been split up into six different
unions, and Beeby had characterised them as representative unions,
although men had been sent round by the powers that be to recruit the
new unions. He claimed that every union proposed to be reregistered
should see to it that the others left out should be treated the same.

Mr Thompson’s Sincerity Questioned

Mr J Burns (Ironworkers) was surprised that Mr Thompson should have
brought the matter before Conference. Tonight he was criticising the scab
unions, yet last May he went behind the backs of some of the unions and
wrote to Mr Holme (the Industrial Commissioner) outlining a scheme
whereby his union and others in the railway and tramway employ could
be worked under a big union scheme, which would include the old unionists and the scab unionists. If he was sincere he should have consulted all the other unions in the matter before going to Holme. The Ironworkers had censured Mr Thompson for trying to link them up with scabs. He questioned the sincerity of Mr Thompson in the matter.

Mr Thompson: “Anyhow, I’ll back my sincerity against yours. Where were you when Kavanagh, Willis and myself were arrested? You didn’t have a word to say then.”

Mr Burns proceeded to accuse Thompson of going behind the backs of the other unions, when Mr Thompson called out, “You are a liar!” To which Mr Burns replied, “I am not a liar; you know it is true”.

Mr Morby (Federated Furniture Workers) said that the matter should not have come before Conference at all, which was there to deal with political matters only. It should have been taken to the Trades and Labor Council. He did not say this in any mean spirit, because he had every sympathy with any union official fighting for the rights of the organisation. He had heard Mr Burns make accusations against Mr Thompson, but he had to tell Conference that during the strike last year Mr Burns had said that unless money was given to his members he would order them to go in and “scab” on the men on strike.

Mr Burns: “That is a deliberate lie”.

Mr Morby: “Well, I can bring proof to show that £600 had been procured from the Amalgamated Engineers and lent to the Ironworkers to prevent Mr Burns from carrying on his threat.”

A Labor Council Matter

He hoped that Conference would turn it down as it was not the place for anything of that kind. He objected to the political body being asked to control industrial matters. He claimed that it was not correct that the State Government had refused registration to twelve unions. They could not register the Wharf Laborers who could only be dealt with by the Federal Court. With the Coal Lumpers an arrangement had been come to, and if it bore fruit it would suit the members very well. The Newcastle Coke workers were in the best position of the lot, because it had been ruled by the Court that the scab union could not take any more members. The Loco, Engine Drivers and Firemen were satisfied with the arrangements they were at present working under. As far as the Railway and Tramway men were concerned, if Mr Thompson pressed his motion, it would prejudice the chances of the others towards recognition later on. It was true that there was no hope of registration for them as some 4780 members were in new organisations.

Mr Thompson: “Out of 50,000.”

Mr Morby agreed that this statement was wrong. Mr Thompson could not organise the 50,000 into his union. He claimed that any move
to prevent the 19 unions (not 17 as Mr Thompson had said) getting reregistration would be a mistake and suicidal. They should get the 19 reregistered and if their case was strong enough they would soon get reregistration for the remainder. To vote for Mr Thompson’s resolution would cause a split and a withdrawal under clause 6 such as had never been seen before. The men themselves wanted reregistration, and any opposition would court disaster to those concerned.

Mr Corliss (Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Association) supported the motion moved by Mr Thompson after which Mr Burns made a personal explanation regarding the statement of Mr Morby that he had threatened that unless he got money his men would scab. He said his men had been out of work 8 weeks and had not received an average of 5/- a week while men out on strike earning more money than his men had been receiving higher strike pay. Another union had been able to get £2000, and he told the Defence Committee that unless he could get some money to carry on his men would be forced through hunger to go back. The Amalgamated Engineers agreed to lend them £600, but they had to give security for the loan and pay interest as well.

**Charge and Counter Charge**

Mr Morby said he was quite prepared to accept the statement, though Mr Burns knew whether the statement was true or not, whereupon Mr Burns protested at the insinuation that his statement was not true, and shouted in a loud voice: “I have always come back with a clear conscience, I am not like Morby—bought by the Nationalist party.”

Mr Morby challenged Mr Burns to prove this statement, which he said had been current talk of late. He gave him the chance to prove it now, and stand by the decision of Conference.

Mr W O’Brien, MLA, said Mr Burns should prove the statement or withdraw it and that if it was not true Conference should deal with Mr Burns.

When the discussion had reached a heated stage, the President (Mr Lambert) said it was a matter between Mr Morby and Mr Burns and not for Conference. They should settle the matter outside.

Eventually the motion moved by Mr Thompson was defeated by a large majority.

Mr Ben Pelin secured the suspension of the Standing Orders to discuss the imprisonment of Tom Barker. He said his sentence had expired last January, but he was still in jail. Recently when he went to see him the Governor of the jail said that nobody could see Barker without the consent of the Commander of the Military Forces. On writing to the latter person for permission he was referred to the Comptroller of Prisons for NSW, who, in turn, referred him to the Commonwealth Solicitor. The latter gentleman thereupon said he had no jurisdiction in
the matter, and referred him back again to the State Law authorities, who again said the matter was not one for them to determine. He moved that a deputation wait on Mr Holman and lay the facts before him, and find out who was behind the whole business.

Eventually the motion was withdrawn on the understanding that it could be brought up at a later stage.

**Deportation of Italians**

Discussion then centered on the deportation of Italians. Mr Bramston detailed that a deputation had endeavoured to see the Italian Consul that morning, whom they located at the Military Barracks. The military officer in charge went to inquire from the Consul whether he would receive the deputation from the Labor Conference and Mr Blakeley (one of the deputation) walked in with him. The Consul, however, refused to see them, and they were given to understand that if they didn’t retire immediately the services of the military police would be called in to shift them. They considered that the best thing they could do under the circumstances was to retire.

Some discussion was entered upon regarding the conscripting of Australians in other countries, whereupon it was resolved that it should be discussed on the following night (Tuesday) in camera.

Some speeches by Captain Toombs and Senators Gardiner and McDougall on the Upper Hunter by-election took up the rest of the evening until Conference close.

**Day 9, Tuesday, 11 June 1918**

**Marketing the Wheat. Labor Party’s Proposals. Pool System to be Permanent.**

The following scheme concerning the control of wheat in the Commonwealth was drawn up by the County Section of delegates to the NSW Labor Conference. In presenting the scheme to Conference on June 11 last, Mr J Bailey (Vice-President, ALP Executive, and President of the Country Section at Conference) said that for months past experienced men had been hard at work collecting and compiling information concerning the future handling of the wheat of the Commonwealth. He said that the whole of the country delegates were in favour of the scheme, and in order to save the time of Conference he would move that it be taken *in globo*. The recommendations came from practical farmers who understood how the pool system had been bungled in the past, particularly by the present Federal Government.
The Scheme in Detail

1. That the pool scheme of marketing wheat, established by the Labor Government in 1915, be placed on a permanent basis, and that the whole of the grain trade be taken over and controlled by the Federal Government, and that silo and bulk handling of wheat be kept free from agents and brokers in the interests of the producers and consumers.

2. That a Federal Grain Board, with equal representation of the producers and consumers, with a chairman appointed by the Government, be established, such board to have control of all business in connection with grain for export of Australian consumption.

3. That Grain Boards be established in each State, with equal representation of the producers and consumers, with a chairman to be appointed by the Federal Government, such Boards to conduct the business in each State under the control of the Federal Board.

4. That local Grain Committees, elected by local farmers, be appointed to supervise all grain handling at country stations, with expert sampling and weighing officers under the control of the Board.

5. That a minimum milling quality standard be fixed, and all payments be made on a sliding scale and in accordance with the milling value of the grain.

6. That jute goods and twine be imported direct by the Federal Government from the manufacturer, to be distributed by the Wheat Boards without the intervention of private middlemen.

7. That grain for export be given preference in shipping space.

8. That the Labor Party’s 1914 election policy, “Commonwealth line of steamers”, under which the Commonwealth service was established, be expanded to cover the whole of Australia’s requirements in shipping, thus providing for the carriage of our products at reasonable rates.

9. That farmers be paid for wheat consumed in Australia at a fair price, based upon the cost of production, to be ascertained by the application of the formula set forth in the next succeeding paragraph.

10. The price of wheat for home consumption in Australia shall be ascertained by an investigation in each State, and thereafter upon an average of the result of those investigations based upon the following:

   (a) The average cost of working a living area-sized farm in each State over a period of five years prior to the first fixation of price, and that such cost be kept up to date from year to year thereafter.

   (b) The payment of a union wage to all persons, including the farmer himself, and any member of his family employed in the production of the wheat crop.

   (c) The cost of necessary farming implements at ruling Australian prices, together with allowances for depreciation and renewal.

   (d) The ruling rate of interest on essential capital employed in operating the farm to be allowed in computing and cost of production.
(e) An allowance, as profit to the farmer, of an amount equal to the ruling rate of interest, on the necessary capital employed in operating the farm.

11. The Commonwealth Government shall retain in Australia at least one year’s supply of wheat towards meeting any unexpected shortage in the annual production.

12. That the farmers be paid the world’s market rates for all export wheat, less cost of administration, thus preventing the exploitation of Australian farmers by other countries as was the case in 1916 and 1917.

13. The farmers be paid in full for their wheat delivered at rail to Government representatives by a special note issue made legal tender, such notes to be withdrawn and retired as settlements of wheat sales are effected. Provided, however, that in any case where a contract of sale for export wheat has not been affected, the payment to the farmer shall be upon delivery as before mentioned, an amount equal to the price fixed for home consumption, with a further payment equal to the balance of the sale affected, for export, less cost of administration, as soon as the contract of sale has been made.

The scheme was adopted on the voices and ordered to be sent along for further discussion to the Interstate Conference in Perth.

**Day 10, Wednesday, 12 June 1918**

**New Land Policy. Labor Conference’s Radical Alterations. Scheme Referred to Next Conference.**

On Wednesday night, June 12, the NSW Labor Conference adopted recommendations by the country delegates’ section of a policy for effective land settlement.

In submitting the recommendations Mr J Bailey (Vice-President of ALP Executive and President of the Country Section at Conference) said the scheme had been given very careful consideration by those vitally interested – the country delegates. He stated that though the scheme was the best they could devise at the moment, if any improvement could be shown they would be incorporated from time to time. He thought it would be a good thing if the experts in this matter could be brought together from time to time to standardise the land policy and prevent Parliamentarians contradicting one another at election time. Even though this policy was adopted they would go on, and from time to time endeavour to perfect it. He then formally moved the scheme for effective land policy as follows:

1. Land Acts to provide for:-

   (a) Optional tenure and removal of all residential conditions applying to land settlement, with necessary safeguards against dummying,
aggregation, and the acquisition of more than a living area under any tenure, or trafficking in land values.

(b) The Western Lands Act to be amended to provide for revocation by the Government of large areas of leasehold lands for closer settlement.

(c) Compulsory resumption of private lands for closer settlement, value to be determined by a competent tribunal, such value not to exceed that fixed by the owner for taxation purposes plus 10 per cent, together with the value of the improvements at the time of the resumption.

(d) That land seekers may apply to a local Land Board for the right to cultivate any privately-owned land, providing the owner has more than 2000 acres of arable land uncultivated, the area, rent, and terms of lease to be determined by such Board.

(e) Where town, city, or suburban lands are held out of legitimate use, and no Crown lands are available, any Australian citizen wishing to acquire a residential area on such lands may do so by application to the local Land Board. The conditions of such land to be determined by the local land Board, financial aid to be given by Federal or State Banks.

**Competent Tribunal to Decide Rent**

(f) Rent payable by settlers on private lands to be determined by a competent tribunal upon application by the tenant or landowner, with security of tenure and tenant rights to improvements effected by tenants.

(g) While maintaining the present exemption of £5000 in the Federal land tax, the incidence of the tax to be increased to secure the proper utilisation of land held in big estates.

(h) Existing improvement and scrub leases to be reviewed, with the option of the withdrawal of those suitable for settlement and the forfeiture of any improperly or illegally granted.

(i) Any person acquiring ordinary Crown lands for permanent settlement to be entitled to remission of rent or payments for the first five years, conditional upon permanent improvements of not less than the value of the remitted rent being effected.

(j) The re-appraisal of holdings at the instance of the Crown not to take place oftener than once during each 20 years’ period, the first re-appraisal to take place 25 years after the date of application. The landholder to have the right of appeal at any time against valuation.

(k) Extensions of the functions of the Commonwealth and State Banks to enable settlers to obtain expeditiously and at lowest possible
rates of interest advances upon improvements, land, stock and crops.
(l) Encouragement of the group system of land settlement.
(m) Closer Settlement Promotion Act to provide that one man in lieu of three may acquire a holding.
(n) All lands to be made available as either additional or original holdings, claims of applicants to be decided by local Land Boards.

One Valuation for All Purposes

(o) Arrangements by the Federal and State Governments by which one valuation will suffice for all Federal, State, Shire and Municipal purposes. That any number of adjoining holdings in one Shire held by one individual be valued conjointly as one holding, the same principle of uniformity to be applied where applicable to assessment for income tax purposes.
(p) That Crown lands on the foreshores of the harbours that may be required for the development of a decentralisation policy be at once reserved from permanent occupancy. That all similar lands that have been alienated and that are or that may be required for shipping and other public purposes be resumed by the State or earmarked for future purchase at present values.
(q) Provision to be made for workmen’s blocks in centres of population.
(r) Provision to be made to prevent speculators from monopolising business and residential allotments in towns and villages.
(s) Election of local members of Land Boards.
(t) Crown Lands Agents to be compelled to fill in forms for applicants for land free of charge.
(u) Members of Parliament to be debarred from acting as paid agents in Crown land matters.
(v) Every Australian citizen upon reaching the age of 18 years to be granted full rights under our land laws.

Moratorium to Continue After the War

(w) The moratorium as at present in existence to apply during the continuance of the war and for three years after.
2. Water conservation and irrigation, with resumption of all frontages to water so conserved, together with such lands as are benefited thereby which are suitable for closer settlement.
3. Existing legislation providing for the distribution of wire netting to be amended to provide for the direct purchase and supply of wire netting and fencing wire to landholders by the Government.

4. The duties of the Pastures Protection Boards to be taken over by the Shire Councils.

5. The sub-letting of Crown lands, and especially of stock reserves to be disallowed.

   Mr B Pelin (Albury) said that country land, like city land, rose in value according to improvements. He moved an amendment to delete the “optional tenure” in clause (a) and the wiping out of the £5000 exemption in clause (g) and a flat rate tax instituted in its stead. If this was done the price of land would fall 50 per cent, and made available to many who could not get land today.

Further Consideration Urged

Alderman O’Hara (Paddington) thought that considerable time should be devoted to a scheme of this kind involving such radical changes and moved as an amendment that it be referred to the leagues and unions for discussion and then placed before Conference. Mr Cullinan (AWU) supported.

   Mr PC Evans (General Secretary) supported Mr Pelin’s amendment to wipe out “optional tenure” in clause (a); He said that apart from the war the greatest thing agitating the Labor Movement today was an effective land scheme. He also protested against the proposal to thrust the scheme down the necks of delegates without proper discussion. The land was the heritage of the people, and should not be parted with, and he contended that the former would be better off under the leasehold system.

   Mr Kelly (Botany) could see nothing wrong with the scheme, and said Labor had to get the support of the farmers if it hoped to do any good in the future, while Mr Rosa (Mosman) supported Alderman O’Hara’s amendment for further discussion. He questioned whether the State was a better landlord than the private landlord.

Considering the Farmer

Mr Lynch (Botany) appealed to Conference to recognise that in framing a policy of this kind the country man had to be considered more than the city unionist. He thought the policy a good one, claiming that the Labor Party had been defeated because of its leasehold policy. He saw no reason why time should be wasted in referring it back to the leagues and unions when practical men had drawn it up.

   Mr Ratcliffe (Balmain) quoted figures regarding land values and taxation for the purpose of showing that the Government did not get enough revenue from the land. As a worker he claimed that the present
system of land taxation was unjust, and urged the abolition of the £5000 exemption. This would cause all vacant land to be used, and would be a benefit to the masses in many ways.

Mr Cleary (Yass) said that, as a landholder in a closely settled district, the right thing had been done in giving landowners the option of tenure, as every farmer should be allowed to choose which policy suited him best. He characterised the proposal to send it back to the leagues and unions as futile and a waste of time.

Farmers are Behind Labor

Mr T Arthur (AWU) supported the motion to adopt the scheme in globo. He contended that the policy of leasehold went a long way to defeating Labor at the last election. The farmers were solid behind the Labor Party, but they wanted, above all, the option of tenure for their land.

Mr O’Loughlin, MLA, said the great problem was to put the land to use, no matter how it was done. They should not impose further burdens on the farmers, but if the £5000 exemption was wiped out the farmers would have to face heavier burdens. The result would be the alienating of the farmers’ votes.

After considerable discussion the motion as moved by Mr Bailey was adopted in globo.

Proposal to Save Time

In discussing the land policy (reported elsewhere in this issue) Mr J Bailey (Vice-President) made a timely observation. He said that country delegates were of the opinion that far too much time was being wasted in discussing bald questions with nothing in them. He suggested the Executive should appoint committees to gather information throughout the year to be submitted to the leagues to be discussed prior to Conference assembling. That would save much time in the future, and enable Conference to adopt policies instead of talking. By this means the work of Conference could be got through in a week instead of wasting two or three weeks in endless debate which led them nowhere at the finish. On the evening of June 12 a considerable amount of time was taken up concerning the right of Mr Kelly to sit at Conference as a delegate from the Newtown League. The President (Mr WH Lambert) stated that the Secretary of the Newtown League had sent along a letter withdrawing Mr Kelly as a delegate because Mr Kelly had voted at Conference contrary to instructions. The credentials committee had gone into the matter and decided there was not enough evidence to warrant Mr Kelly being withdrawn. After a long explanation from Mr Kelly the report of the credentials committee was adopted.
Day 11, Thursday, 13 June 1918

Imprisoned Broken Hill Men

Last Thursday night, June 13, Mr Kerr secured the suspension of the standing order to move that a deputation wait on the Government to urge the release of the eight Broken Hill men still imprisoned as a result of the recent general strike. The motion was carried – Messrs Lambert, Clarke, Kerr, Brookfield (MLA) and Wright (MLA) to constitute the deputation.

Considerable time was taken up dealing with correspondence addressed to the Conference on various matters. With regard to a couple of letters protesting against the curtailing of free speech, Mr Iceton (Northern Colliery Employees) moved that a committee be appointed to prepare a scheme for safeguarding free speech. Corporal Murphy said that the Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Imperial League were mainly responsible for the new situation that had arisen. This body, he contended, had moved in the interests of the Nationalist Party. He protested at the action of Mr Bagnall, MLA, who he designated as a Labor “rat” in trying to stifle free speech.

The motion to appoint a committee was carried on the voices – the personnel of the committee to be left in the hands of the Executive.

Almost two nights were occupied in discussing a memorandum outlined by Mr JH Catts, MHR, dealing with the matter of war credits. However, on last Thursday night it was decided on the motion of Mr Iceton (Colliery Employees Federation) to refer the scheme back to the Executive for further enquiry, and to be submitted to the next Conference for discussion.

Organising Committee. Report to Annual Conference.

What the Committee is Doing

At the 1916 Conference it was decided to form an organising committee consisting of members of the Executive, Federal and State Parties, and representative Labor women, to take charge of the work of organising and campaign direction. The activities of the committee appointed last year were detailed in a report presented to Conference by the chairman of the committee (Mr J Bailey) on Thursday night, June 13. The report is as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your committee held (including specials) 34 meetings during the past twelve months. The names of the members of the committee are as follows:
Executive – J Bailey, AC Willis, JM Power, GC Bodkin, A Rae, A Rutherford, P Adler, Miss M Mathews
M'sHR – JH Catts, E Riley, C Wallace, W Mahoney
M'sLA – RJ Stuart-Robertson, VC Johnston, CH Bushell, J Storey, J Dooley, PF Loughlin
Senators – J Grant, A Gardiner
Women’s Central Organising Committee – Mrs E Seery, Mrs Benson

Owing of the death of the late members for the Macquarie, the Murray, and Cobar (Messrs Thrower, Scobie and Fern), and the resignation of Mr Mac Abbott, member for the Upper Hunter, your committee had to arrange to contest four by-elections during this period. Macquarie and Cobar were retained for the Party by the election of Messrs P McGirr for the Macquarie and MA Davidson (unopposed) for Cobar. The Murray went to the National candidate, and Upper Hunter was retained by the Nationalist Party.

**Propaganda Meetings**

Lectures for propaganda purposes have been instituted every Sunday night at the IOOF Temple, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, which have been largely attended, and have proved very beneficial from an educational point of view, and have helped materially to increase the public interest in the justice of the principles upon which the Movement is founded.

Sunday afternoon meetings have also been held in the Domain at which members of the Executive and the Federal and State Parliamentary Parties have addressed large audiences in connection with the various political questions of immediate concern. Collections have been taken up at these meetings, and have resulted in a generous response from the public from time to time. The proceeds during the recent industrial upheaval were devoted to the relief of the suffering caused thereby.

During the No-Conscription Campaign last year the committee was merged into the No-Conscription Campaign Headquarters Committee, and our whole energies were directed towards bringing about success in the campaign.

During the year the committee classified the whole of the State and Federal electorates, with a view of concentration for organising purposes. And, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Parties, your Committee has arranged for each Member of Parliament to take over the organising of one electorate other than his own.

**Appointment of General Organiser**

It was also decided that a General Organiser should be appointed to take control of the organising of the State, and that an Organising Department
be created in connection with Head Office to deal with the many problems associated therewith. Applications were called for the position, and Mr A Rae was elected from among many applicants. Mr Rae has commenced the duties of the position, which it has been decided shall be as follows:

To take charge of all organising work throughout the State, with headquarters at Room 38, Macdonell House.

To attend to the publicity section by giving special attention to preparing articles for the city and country press, counteracting the statements of our opponents, and explaining the objects and principles of the Movement.

To keep in touch with all Labor supporters in the various centres, recording same, and keeping such records up-to-date.

**Financial scheme, Re-organising**

The State elections in Queensland and South Australia were held during the year, and proved a triumph for the Labor Movement in those States, a result which the Parliamentary Parties of New South Wales helped to attain, their services being placed at the disposal of the Movement in each State.

In conclusion, your committee desires to place on record its hearty appreciation of the services that have been rendered by the members of the State and Federal Parliamentary Parties and the members of the Executive, the harmony and goodwill which have at all times existed between each section contributing largely to the excellent results that have been achieved.

The adoption of the report was carried on the voices without discussion.

**Proposed Weekly Organising Newspaper**

On Thursday night last (June 13) Mr John Bailey (Vice-President and Chairman of the Organising Committee) submitted a scheme for the better organising of the State electorates. In outlining the proposal of a weekly organising newspaper the speaker said that while it was not all that was required, it was at least a step in the right direction. A newspaper was required in order to keep in touch with the outlying centres which could not be reached in any other way except at great expense.

The scheme proposed was the issuing of a special 8-page weekly organising edition of *The Worker* – six pages of which would be devoted to political news, cartoons, comment from the Australian Labor point of view, and weekly reports from local centres. Two pages only would be allotted to advertisements.
In order to finance the scheme each of the 90 electorates would be asked to raise £1 per week – in all £90 per week. A further £45 would be secured from advertising – making in all a total of £135 in revenue. The cost of printing, publishing and posting the paper would be £101/5/- leaving a margin of £34/15/- per week for special editorial, general organising and other contingent expenses.

**Scheme Looks Good**

At the outset it was proposed to issue 22,500 copies on the basis of 250 copies for each of the electorates contributing. Local committees would be established in each electorate to institute a fund on such lines as may be devised, and supply the necessary postal addresses, which could be changed from week to week if considered desirable. The paper would also be made available to the general public at one penny per copy, or 5/- per year post free. Unions would be allowed to contribute on the same basis as electorates, while if an electorate subscribed more money than set out above a like increase in the circulation would take place. Any profit derived from the scheme would go to the committee for other organisation purposes.

Mr Bailey said that the paper would be under the sole control of the ALP Executive, and would be a great factor in letting the people in the far-back electorates know what the Labor Party was and what the platform was. He didn’t think £1 per week per electorate too much to guarantee. In the recent Upper Hunter campaign two issues of a propaganda weekly newspaper had done an immense amount of good, while local committees had been saved a great deal of work.

The scheme outlined by Mr Bailey was, after a short discussion, adopted by Conference.

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**Day 12, Friday, 14 June 1918**

**IWW Matters**

Not more than 120 delegates were seated at the Conference when it resumed business on Friday evening.

Several deputations appointed by Conference reported concerning what had been done by them. For the deputation appointed to wait on the Holman Government with regard to the imprisoned IWW men whose terms of imprisonment had expired, but who were still held in jail, Mr Cullinan (AWU) stated that they were given to understand that where it could be shown that the men in jail had taken no active part in the IWW propaganda, the Premier said he was prepared to see what
could be done. With the men not long in this country from other countries he was quite unsympathetic. With regard to the proposal that men like Tom Barker, whose terms of imprisonment had expired, should be transferred from jail to an internment camp and at least treated as well as the Germans, he also promised to see what he could do in this direction. He could tell them, however, that since the protest had been made against the decision of the military authorities that nobody could see Barker, a wire had been sent to the Governor of Albury Jail instructing him to allow visitors to see Barker as usual.

With regard to the deputation appointed to wait on the Sydney Trades and Labor Council to devise what could be done re the deportation of Italians, the Sydney Labor Council had decided to place their No-Conscription Committee at the hands of Conference to do all they could for the Italians.

**Barrier Prisoners**

Another deputation was appointed to wait on Mr Holman regarding the Barrier men still in jail as a result of the recent strike – eight in number. Mr Brookfield, MLA, announced the result of the interview with Mr Holman. The Government had consented to reduce the terms of imprisonment of certain of the Barrier unionists. In the case of men sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, the sentence has been reduced to four months, and in the case of Bradwell – who received a sentence of 12 months – his sentence would be reduced to eight months. Mitchell, Huntingford, and Stringer would thus be released on June 26; O’Donnell, Robinson, and Stacey on June 29; and Bryan on July 14. Bradwell would be released four months later.

**Ireland and Conscription**

Mr Donovan moved a long motion to the effect that Conference strongly protest against the application of conscription to Ireland without the consent of the Irish people.

Mr Kelly (Mascot) moved an amendment – “That the sympathy of Australians be extended to the Irish people in their fight against conscription”. The amendment was carried.

**The Industrialist Section**

Mr Cullinan (AWU) moved – “That we heartily endorse the good work of the Industrial Section, and respectfully request the continuance of that body”. He said the Section had done good work, as was well known, and that it would still continue to do good work.
Alderman O’Hara (Paddington), in seconding the motion gave a lengthy outline of the work done by the Industrial Section. In 1916 it had broken the power of the Holmanite politicians, and put an end to the miserable shuffling then taking place. They forced the fight on conscription, when Hughes returned from England and tried to conscript the workers; prevented Holman, Hall, Watson and others from foisting conscription on the leagues and turning the country leagues into conscription depots; struck the first staggering blow at conscription in Australia; and were responsible for defeating it by such an overwhelming majority in New South Wales. They had kicked the conscriptionists out of the Movement, and would see to it that the conscriptionists were kept out.

**Does Not Meet In Secret**

They met every month not to control the Executive, but to see that everything was being done to carry out the policy as expressed at Conference. They did not meet in secret, as had been alleged. The Section was formed in the interests of the Labor Movement, and not in the interests of the politicians.

Mr D Conroy moved an amendment – “That a metropolitan Political Labor Council be formed under the auspices of the ALP Executive to perform the functions of the existing Industrial Vigilance Council, to meet monthly and discuss matters of vital importance to the Movement, and advise the Executive on matters affecting the political welfare of the Movement”. This was seconded by Mr Saunders (Milk and Ice Carters), who claimed that the Industrial Section had done the work for which it was formed and should now disband.

Mr O’Brien (Musicians) objected to the method of the Section in arranging voting tickets. He claimed that Conference had no power to elect any man not having the confidence of the Industrial Section, no matter how good the man might be.

**“Has Outlived Its Usefulness”**

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, contended that the Section had justified its existence by burying Holman, Hughes, Watson, and others, and that it should now disband. He wanted to see a committee representative of all leagues and unions who cared to air their views. The constitution of the Section should be broadened.

Mr Ben Pelin (Albury), amidst much laughter, said that at the present time thirty wealthy farmers, who owned motor cars, and twenty aspiring politicians controlled the Industrial Section.

Mr Rosa (Mosman) said it was wrong to speak of the Industrial Vigilance Council as a section. It may have been one in the past, but it
was not one now. Any league or union caring to affiliate had the right to take part in the discussions. Already many of the country leagues were represented and none were forbidden. There was no secrecy about the body.

To Prevent Possible Evils

He said that if it was abolished it opened the way to a return of the old evils. The good work they had done would be then swept away. Their decision to have alternate delegates elected for the Executive was a good one, as it allowed for a full Executive to be present to deal with business and prevent cliquism through only a few Executive members being present. He didn’t think the Movement was yet quiet as clean as it might be.

Eventually the motion moved by Mr Cullinan was carried on the voices.

Referred to Next Conference

Last Friday evening Mr Cullinan (AWU) moved to have the [land] scheme recommitted, but the motion was defeated by 54 votes to 67. However, on Saturday afternoon another attempt was made.

Mr G Saunders (Milk and Ice Carters) moved – “That it be an instruction to the Executive to clearly define the position of the Party re land policy; to instruct members, candidates, and speakers that resolutions of the Conference of 1918 on the land policy are not a plank of the Party’s platform; and, further, that the incoming Executive be instructed to prepare and submit the matter for consideration at next Conference.”

Mr Evans (General Secretary) suggested that the land policy as passed be withdrawn and placed before the next Conference in a constitutional manner.

Mr J Bailey (Vice-President) argued that these constitutional points should have been raised when all the country delegates were present, instead of waiting till they had gone. He objected to the matter being brought up again in the absence of the country delegates; and thought they were in honour bound to stand by the decision.

Not Constitutional

The President (Mr Lambert) claimed that it was not constitutionally before Conference, and could not constitutionally go on the platform. The only way they could constitutionally alter the platform was by giving three months’ notice of such alteration to the leagues and unions. They could not reject the land policy, having passed it, but it should be referred to the Executive for circulation.
Mr J Andrews (AWU) claimed that Mr Bailey had made it plain that it was a resolution to go out and be placed on the platform at the next Conference. In the meantime, of course, by-elections would be fought on it. There was nothing wrong, he said, with that.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said it was an oversight that Labor was committed to speaking with two voices. If the policy went out as it stood they would have some speakers advocating the cessation of Crown land sales in accordance with the platform, and others would be speaking in favour of optional tenure. In this Mr Hutchinson (Painters) concurred.

Eventually the motion as outlined by Mr Saunders was carried on the voices.

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**Day 13, Saturday, 15 June**

**Attendance Growing Less**

It was some time before Conference could make headway on Saturday afternoon, owing to the absence of delegates. As soon as Conference met a delegate proposed “That total prohibition be a plank of the Labor Party’s Platform”. However, as the required number of delegates were not present the matter had, perforce, to lapse.

**Bonus for Large Families**

A sufficient number of delegates having entered the Conference to enable platform matters being dealt with, Mr RW Cruickshank (Randwick) moved – “That a special and regular bonus be granted by the Commonwealth to all parents for every child over the number of two, such bonus to be on a sliding scale in accordance with the number of children”. He claimed that this matter was as important as the old-age pension and the maternity allowance. With such a scheme in operation the lives of many of the 10,000 children who die annually before reaching their first birthday in this country would be saved. As a start he thought there should be a payment of 5/- per week per child (above the number of two) from birth till the age of fourteen. Three million pounds was being spent annually on old-age pensions and about £750,000 on the maternity allowance and the motion (if placed on the statute book) would involve something like £4,000,000 per annum. They should see to it that the country that could raise £300,000,000 for war purposes could also raise a paltry £4,000,000 to save life every year. The rich people didn’t raise large families, and as the workers raised families for the industrial hells they should at least see to it that they were given some reasonable chance of comfort in life.
Mrs Seery (Surry Hills) supported the motion. She had often wondered how some of the children existed at all in homes where there were large families. The wages paid today were not sufficient to keep large families. They did not expect to get anything from the Nationalist Governments, but a Labor Government might be in power soon, and they could then give effect to it.

The motion was carried unanimously.

**Soldiers Policy**

Conference then proceeded to discuss some important matters on the agenda paper under the heading of “Soldier Policy”.

Corporal Murphy (Returned Soldiers’ Political League) moved for “an unemployment scheme of insurance to meet the special needs of returned soldiers”, and said that there should be some scheme of insurance as outlined to prevent this hardship. The motion was carried.

Mrs Stone (St Peters League) moved – “That permanently and partly crippled and blind returned soldiers to have free passes on trams and suburban trains”.

Mr McPherson opposed the motion. There should not be preferential treatment for one section of the community. It was dividing the democracy by introducing sentiment into the matter.

Mr Hackett (Woollahra), in support of the motion, said that rightly or wrongly the men had gone to the war, and we should at least see that they were properly treated when they returned.

**Dependents’ Pay and Pensions**

Corporal Murphy moved – “That no deduction be made to dependents of soldiers because of a soldier’s discharge through being contaminated with venereal diseases”. He said they had the sad spectacle of men contaminated with this disease and their dependents being made to suffer. When the Australian soldiers had been sent to Egypt and dumped down in their tens of thousands, thousands of loose women were allowed to roam at large in Egypt instead of being placed in concentration camps. Even if the men made a mistake, that was no reason why their wives and children should be made to suffer. The motion was carried.

He also moved – “That no deduction in pensions be made because of a soldier not receiving injury or sickness while not actually on the scene of action”. He said that once a soldier left Australia he was under Imperial control, and if anything happened to him en route his dependents and he, too, were not entitled to anything. He knew of cases where men with large families had had their pensions rejected because their accidents happened when not on active service. The motion was carried.
Employment of Soldiers

Corporal Murphy also moved a motion for a Royal Commission to inquire into the returned men and employment in the State and Commonwealth services. After several speakers had instanced that returned men were being asked to work for less wages than was paid to others both in Government and private employ, it was decided “that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the rates of pay and conditions of employment of the returned soldiers in the State and Commonwealth services and in private employ”. The following were appointed to a committee to report to the Executive on the matter: Messrs Hutchinson, Rosa, Rae, Gibbs, and G Burns.

Mr Kelly (Newtown) moved – “That all mothers who have a son, whether he be an illegitimate or not, killed on military service be entitled to a pension of £1 per week”. This was carried.

Corporal Murphy moved – “That all men discharged from the AIF should receive a life pension, say, of £1 per week, bedrock rate”. On this Mr George Burns (Illawarra) moved an amendment that all incapacitated soldiers receive a pension of £1/10/- per week. The amendment was carried.

Corporal Murphy then moved that the sustenance allowance be paid weekly instead of daily, and that returned soldiers desirous of entering into business should receive assistance from the Repatriation Committee, although not in business prior to enlistment; such financial assistance to be subject to repayment over a given period of time. This was carried.

It was decided to remit the various recommendations dealing with the Soldier Policy to the Interstate Conference for consideration and confirmation.

Disfranchisement of Electors

Mr Thos Thick (Woollahra) moved – “That Conference instructs the Executive to prepare, circulate, and present a petition to the Federal Government praying for the restoration of electoral and civil rights and liberties of Australian-born subjects of enemy parentage”. He characterised the action of the Government in disfranchising these people as one of low-down spite. The politician mainly responsible for this came overseas long after the children of the old German pioneers had helped to make the country worth living in. The German settlers had been asked to come here by previous Governments and settle, and were promised the rights held by Australians. But the very class who had invited them here and offered them the privileges of the franchise were now taking it away from them.

The motion, with the addition of “and naturalised subjects,” was carried.
Reorganising the Movement

Mr P Adler (Blacksmiths’ Union) moved five motions, the object of which were practically to reorganise the Movement. These resolutions provided for a reorganisation of country leagues, with a view of enlarging their scope and activities; that an effort be made to broaden the scope of the ALP, so as to bring into line all working-class organisations and for the closer organisation and combination by the Trade Union Movement; for the formation of workshop propaganda.

On the motion of Mr Kelly (Mascot) it was decided to submit the matters to the Executive for further consideration prior to next Conference.


IWW Prisoners

At the New South Wales Labor Conference last Saturday night, Mr Buckley secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved a lengthy motion urging Conference to try and secure the release of the twelve IWW men sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. He said that as representatives of the working class, they should stand by the imprisoned men. The interests of the men in jail were the interests of Labor. He did not believe that the men were guilty, and it appeared to him the only thing left was to demand their release. He was supported by another delegate, who claimed that the men had not had a fair trial, and that the reason why they were still in jail was because the workers were too apathetic. He characterised the sentences as outrageous.

Mr Burke, MLA, said the motion proposed by Mr Buckley had his entire support.

What Has Been Done

Mr SA Rosa (a member of the committee appointed by Conference last year to inquire into the matter) made a lengthy report to Conference as to what had been done by that committee. Numerous meetings had been held, at which the whole of the evidence was gone into. They had also examined many witnesses who might be able to throw some further light on the subject. They came to the unanimous opinion that the men had not had a fair trial. The reason why they had received such heavy sentences was, in his opinion, because the public mind had been inflamed and biased. The whole prosecution was the result of the unscrupulous machinations of Hughes, Holman, Hall and others, who prejudiced the men on their trial for their own base, mercenary and purely partisan purposes in order that they might raise themselves to place and power.
The Case of Beatty

He instanced the case of Beatty. Justice Pring had said during the trial: “It is my duty to draw attention to the fact that the only evidence against Beatty is the evidence of an accomplice. You should not convict in these circumstances. But you have the power to convict.” Yet in spite of this direction, the jury convicted Beatty on the evidence of the accomplice Scully, and sent him to jail for 15 years. He was not in a position to say whether the men were guilty or not, but in his opinion, the evidence wasn’t sufficient to convict them. He said that to secure a new trial under the present Government was of no use at all. They might go so far as to demand, as was done in the Dean case, an unbiased Royal Commission. It was often possible to get a proper tribunal from men who were not blessed by the technicalities of legal training.

Mr Buckland (AWU) said it appeared to him that the committee appointed had done very little during the year, to which Mr Rosa replied that that was not true. The committee had gone into the evidence – no light matter – had held sittings, examined witnesses, and investigated everything possible. There were many confidential matters that could not be laid before Conference, and if Conference was of the same opinion as he was, they would not press for it.

A Royal Commission Urged

Alderman O’Hara (Paddington) opposed the resolution and said that while he wanted to see the men out of jail, he thought it absurd for Mr Buckley to urge a new trial and then to demand their release. He thought that a Royal Commission should be appointed in justice to the men and the public, and moved in that direction as an amendment – “That a Royal Commission be granted to go into the whole matter”.

Mr F Burke, MLA, said they were all of the same mind – that the men had not had a fair trial. It seemed to him that not much had been done of a practical character by the committee. His league (Newtown) was doing all it could do in the matter. Only the other night he had been twitted in the House by Holman that his league was doing nothing but passing motions about the IWW men, but he took the opportunity of reminding Holman that there was a time when he (Holman) was in jail himself.

Mr Morby Sets Conference Thinking

Mr Morby rose to oppose the resolution and was subjected to much interruption by delegates and the public at the back of the hall. He said that he was also on the committee appointed to investigate the case by last Conference. After having reached a definite point, the committee had to virtually disband, and that was the reason why he was opposing the
motion. He considered he was speaking in the best interests of the men themselves. If a new trial was granted the whole of the committee that investigated the cases would be liable to be called to the witness-box to swear either falsely or truly whether they were in possession of certain information. If he told Conference the truth tonight it would be the first to disagree with him.

**Urges Reduction in Sentence**

He was quite prepared to go to the Government and urge that the sentences were too excessive, and that they should be reduced. That, he thought, was their only chance at present. There were a hundred and one reasons why there should not be a new trial, and he asked Conference not to press for them. There was information in their possession that had come from men who could be trusted. He could not say on oath that they were all innocent – though he did not believe them to be all guilty. He thought they should direct the new Executive to take up the work of the old Executive and still further investigate the matter. He moved – “That it be an instruction to the incoming Executive to appoint a committee of five to continue investigations re the twelve IWW men”.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said a Royal Commission or a new trial could do no good. The trial was prejudiced; all agreed to that. They should get what he thought was the best thing – a Parliamentary Select Committee to go into the whole case. He would suggest such a committee, comprising six Labor men and four Liberals. This, he thought, was the best course to take.

**Mr Morby’s Speech Resented**

Mr Rosa made a passionate speech, and said that Mr Morby was present at one meeting of the committee only, and did not know everything that took place. He was trying to get Conference to believe that some doubt existed in the mind of the committee. He repudiated the idea that Morby had given close attention to the case, and denied that the committee had disbanded. He made statements before Conference, from which only one inference could be drawn – that some of the men were guilty. He (Rosa) had to say that the Committee knew nothing of the sort of thing alleged by Mr Morby. Mr Rosa said that if certain men made statements, and they were hearsay, they were not justified in accepting them. No man had told the committee definitely that the men were guilty from firsthand information. There was no court of justice that would convict men on hearsay evidence. All they could do was to suspend judgment.

Mr Morby said he had attended more than one meeting, but even Mr Rosa would not make him say what took place before the committee. “I have made a statement and Conference can take it as it likes,” he added.
“The Truth Must be Told”

After a heated interchange of words between Mr Rosa and Mr Evans, the latter said that at this stage it would be just as well to have the true facts of the case. (Cries of “No” and “Yes.”). “The truth must be told,” he added. “I object to the statement made by Mr Morby being turned upside down by Mr Rosa.” An interested person had informed him of something connected with the case, and he felt justified in calling the committee together to investigate the statements.

Mr Bailey pointed out that the committee had been bound to secrecy on the matter, and that the matter should not be divulged. A team of horses should not be able to drag that information out of the committee.

After Mr Evans had furnished Conference with certain details, he stated that while there was no question about the way in which the conviction was brought about, the committee were of the opinion that nothing more could be done than had been recommended in the annual report.

Mr TJ Smith, MLA, said he had intended to move in Parliament for a Select Committee, but another person known to them and respected by them had persuaded them not to do so, as there were things he could not divulge to them.

Mr Boston (Wagga) said he was surprised at some of the statements made that might incriminate anybody, while Mr McPherson protested against statements made to the committee unless they could be substantiated. A lady delegate added that she believed the men were innocent. She favored a Royal Commission.

No Evidence of Guilt

Mr Lambert (President) said they had no evidence of the guilt of the men. He had also been on the committee. It was only second-hand stuff they had got hold of. The committee in its annual report had recommended the appointment of a Royal Commission, and he thought it was no use Mr Buckley demanding their release. He thought, anyhow, it was Mr Buckley’s place to have done something in Parliament for the men. He said, in reply to a delegate, that further information should be given to Conference, that if Conference was wise it would not press for it. He could say, however, that in a court of law the evidence submitted would not have been accepted.

Eventually it was decided that a Royal Commission should be asked for on the matter.
Minimum Price of Wheat

On the last night of the NSW Labor Conference Mr Lynch (Botany), on behalf of the Country Section, moved “That this Conference declares that 5/- a bushel be the minimum price of 1918-1919 wheat, payable on delivery at railways”. He said the increase in the price of wheat as proposed would not mean any increase in the price of bread, while the farmer would get a fairer deal than at present. He instanced the high prices paid for wheat in other countries, and asserted that the country was being taxed and robbed imperially. As a result of fixing a high price of wheat in Canada the area under cultivation increased 33⅓ per cent., while in this country owing to the low price the area under cultivation had decreased 33⅓ per cent. If any wheat was sent abroad he contended the farmer should get the price it was sold at, less freight. The motion was carried on the voices.

Economic Conscription

Mr Bodkin (Railway Workers, AWU) moved that the Conference view with indignation the attitude of the Government in giving instructions to their employing agents not to employ men between the ages of 19 and 45. He dealt at length with the policy of economic conscription as carried out on the railway construction works. No man could get employment between those ages now, whether he was fit or unfit – the rule applying to single as well as married men. It was grossly unfair to have the poorer people thus conscripted while the rich profiteers between the ages were allowed to go scot free. A seconder to the motion suggested that the Labor Party and the unions might devise some scheme of co-operative employment by which all men victimised would be given a chance to live. The motion, as moved by Mr Bodkin, was carried.

The Lestrange Case

Mr Brookes (Australian Clerical Association) moved to have the case of Lestrange re-opened and discussed, but the proposal was defeated by an overwhelming majority.

Mr E Dwyer (Punchbowl) moved “That the evidence and findings of the recent Interstate Food Commission be made public”, and said it was about time the workers knew what transpired at the various commissions held instead of the present star chamber methods. Mr Treflé said there were about 1500 pages of the Commission’s evidence, but that only about a dozen pages had been made public. The motion was carried.
ALP Platform. Alterations Recommended by Committee.  
Present Platform Too Unwieldy

The NSW Executive of the Australian Labor Party has, for some time past, had under consideration the cumbrous and unwieldy size to which the State Platform has grown by numerous additions made at every Conference and very little having been accomplished during the existence of a Labor Government to carry its proposals into law.

A Sub-Committee was therefore appointed to make proposals for bringing the Platform within reasonable limits, and several sittings took place. This Committee was of opinion that the present Platform has the following disadvantages:

1. That very few members of the Movement are thoroughly acquainted with it or with the object of many of the proposals.
2. That the efforts of Labor supporters lose their force by being spread over too much ground, and that a shorter and more simple Platform would therefore be better understood, and more successful in rallying our fighting forces.
3. That Labor candidates and members would be immensely strengthened in their campaign work if they had to concentrate on a few big issues only, especially if they could assure the electors that no change could be made in the Platform during the life of the ensuing Parliament.
4. The Executive having discussed the report of the Sub-Committee, decided that it was of sufficient importance to be printed and considered by Conference. It is therefore, submitted for the consideration of delegates in the following form:

State Fighting Platform

No.1 To stand as printed.
No.2 Reduction of cost of commodities and of rent.
No.3 Equitable industrial laws, administered under union control.
No.4 Effective land settlement, with financial assistance to settlers and stoppage of Crown land sales.
No.5 Transference of all banking, private and State, to Commonwealth ownership and control with provision for public works being financed through our own banking institutions without resort to borrowing.
No.6 Establishment of the iron and steel industry by Federal or State Government.
No.7 Reafforestation and mining law reform.
No.8 Complete educational facilities, free to all.
No.9 Nationalisation of Health.
Recommendations

(a) That the whole of the details of the Fighting Platform be eliminated and the General Platform laid aside.
(b) That the Executive, together with the Parliamentary Party, issue a manifesto setting forth the meaning and intention of the various proposals.
(c) That the Platform as adopted prior to a General Election shall not be altered during the lifetime of the next ensuing Parliament, in the event of a Labor Government being returned to power.

Discussion was proceeding on the matter when the President ruled that as there were not the necessary 100 delegates present the debate could not proceed.

Nearing the End

A delegate of the Letter Carriers’ Union moved: “That full civil rights be granted to all public servants”, and instanced cases where men were penalised because they had criticised the Government or took part in the anti-conscription campaign. The motion was carried.

On the motion of Nurse Tarrant, Conference decided that any medical man refusing to attend to a maternity case should be held responsible for the life of the mother and child, and in the event of death should be tried for murder; also that medical men be compelled to attend cases, if asked to do so, the Government to pay the fee in the event of the patient being unable to afford it.

The Conference was brought to a conclusion at 10.30.

[NThe Daily Telegraph indicates that most discussion on the Monday evening concerned the disruption of a Labor Party meeting in the Domain on the Sunday by rowdy elements identified as returned servicemen. The Australian Worker (27 June 1918) has a separate report on that incident which is reproduced here.]


Huge Crowd at Sydney Domain

A huge crowd, reminding one of the anti-conscription campaign days, attended the Sydney Domain last Sunday, when the Free Speech fight was opened by the Labor Party. Various estimates place the gathering as round about 100,000. The conscriptionist papers, of course, tried to minimise the importance of the movement, and put the gathering down at somewhere about 60,000.

No doubt owing to the publicity given to the manner in which the police kept “order” on the Domain on the previous Sunday the police last Sunday did indeed keep perfect order without interfering with any of the Labor speakers. Some 500 police in uniform and plain clothes were
present, and protected the speakers against any intended attack from the soldiers opposed to the Labor Party. Police were detailed off in couples to report the utterances of various speakers, while at each meeting the Labor Party had also expert shorthand writers taking full reports for their own protection.

Speaking from a platform in charge of Mr J Cullinan, Mr Brookfield, MLA, satirised the “patriotism” of eligible Nationalist politicians in the “gas house” – as he designated Parliament. If it were a crime to urge peace by negotiation, he had to tell them that at the present time a great number of lords, barons, earls, and peers were stumping England doing the same thing. He warned the Holman Government against attempting to curtail free speech, and stated that any such action on its part would cause numerous secret societies to spring up who might take drastic action – and nobody wanted to see that.

“What Have They Done?”

Senator Gardiner said that the Holman Government was not game to take the rights of the people away in an open manner, but proposed to take them little by little until finally there were no political rights left. He challenged anybody to name a single thing the Nationalist politicians had done towards winning the war since they had been elected. He had been told that the reason they had done nothing so far was that they were preparing a great strategic move by which the war could be won. Watt was going to fire the first shot, and then the war would be won in quick time. (Laughter.) He instanced the fact that Watt, Holman, Hall, Orchard, Massey, Greene and other Nationalists were of military age, yet they had not made up their minds so far about trying a bit in the trenches themselves. None of these were game to go to the country and say, “Come, I will lead you into the trenches”. Walpole had said that “Any peace is better than the most successful war”, while Franklin had said, “There never was a good war, and there never was a bad peace”. With 15,000,000 killed and more than that number mangled and injured, could any man say that those who talked peace were traitors to their country? The man who could bring the fighting nations to a peace table to negotiate was a benefactor to mankind. He contended that just as the Allies could not be beaten to their knees by the enemy, so the enemy could not be beaten to its knees by the Allies. It was madness to talk like that. He said that if Holman put his proposed legislation into effect he would find that there were not enough jails built to house those who would oppose him. He urged the people to keep good order and good sense, and if that were done no government would be able to rob them of freedom of speech.

Mr Samuel Toombs made a lengthy speech, in which he exposed Holman’s double-faced attitude at the recent Recruiting Conference and
in the Parliament House last week. He also dealt extensively with the methods adopted by the Holman Government to win the Upper Hunter election.

Messrs F Burke and J Dooley, MsLA, also delivered speeches.

Who the “Patriots” Are

From another platform Mr John Storey, Leader of the State Labor Party, entered a vigorous protest against the proposed action of the Holman Government. He said the Nationalists were trying to make capital out of the fact that they believed in peace by negotiation, but said the time would come when even the Nationalists would have to accept a peace by negotiation whether they liked it or not. Those most insistent in their patriotism were the people who were childless or who had not sent any sons to the war. He added that the Government of the day should not have the temerity and impudence to attach a free living and free believing people.

The following motion was put to the two monster gatherings and carried unanimously: “That this representative gathering of the citizens of New South Wales strongly protests against the contemplated action of the Government to stifle freedom of speech, and regards it as an attempt to take from the people their right to discuss publicly all matters that vitally affect their interests.”

From another large gathering in the centre of the Domain, Mr Judd and others addressed meetings and carried the following resolution:

“That this public meeting expresses its indignation and resentment at the recent flagrant attempt to break up public meetings and suppress freedom of speech by physical violence. We also desire to express our unqualified condemnation of the daily press for its approval of these methods, and call upon all citizens who believe in civilised methods in the discussion of momentous issues to assist us in the preservation of peace and order.”

Judd Summoned

Arising out of the disturbance of the previous Sunday, Mr Judd has received a summons under the War Precautions Act for making an alleged statement likely to prejudice recruiting, as follows: “By what I have seen all these fellows who want so much fight have never seen the firing line. Most of the soldiers that I have seen who want so much fight are the men who got no further than Cairo and the Egyptian women.”

His case comes on for hearing today (June 27). A summons has also been received by Mr Vance Marshall.
CHAPTER 3
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 7 - 17 June 1919

Report in Labor News; The Australian Worker

Factional politics in the NSW Labor Party reached one of its major crises at this Conference. At the Annual Conference of 1916 control of the State Executive had been won by the so-called ‘Industrial Section’, a grouping of trade unions dominated by the AWU. At the beginning of 1918 the faction’s name changed to ‘The Industrial Vigilance Council’, but already there was a struggle for internal control of the faction itself between the ‘extremists’ led by Albert Willis of the Mining Federation and Sam Rosa, a radical socialist ideologue, against the ‘moderates’. Led by the AWU, the moderates made a clean sweep of positions on the Executive. This imposition of a winner-take-all principle produced the predictable result – the Conference came to an abrupt end after nine days when the extremists walked out in a body to stage their own meeting which eventually led to the formation of a new Socialist Party to the left of the ALP. This left the AWU in complete control of the factional machinery controlling the official Labor Party.

The issues dividing the two factions (internal factions within one faction) were on display at the Conference. One was the desired relationship between the ALP and the ‘One Big Union’ (OBU) movement sponsored by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). These movements were based on a syndicalist ideology that saw socialist transformation of society achievable only through militant trade unionism, amalgamating into one massive organisation to bring capitalist society to a halt through a strategic general strike. Devotees of the OBU and IWW had only contempt for the ALP strategy of incremental reform through parliamentary representation of the workers. Obviously, the great majority of Labor MPs were not sympathetic to the OBU. Neither was the AWU, which wanted other unions to amalgamate with it, and which supported parliamentary activity, especially when the AWU held control of the extra-parliamentary machinery. The other issue of the day was the war, which had only just ended. Virtually all members of the ALP supported the vision of a completely new world order, envisaged in
President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, but the moderates were not about to abolish any capacity for Australia's future defence, which they feared was one of the aims of the extremists.

On the floor of Conference the agenda item causing most friction was the proposal of the ‘extremists’ to change the rules for the election of the State Executive so that branch rank and file members (rather than the AWU-controlled Conference) would elect the Executive by a popular plebiscite. Rather more complicated was the issue of the socialist objective: the ‘extremists’ pushed hard for the use of an OBU version of a preamble to the Platform. MPs, led by John Storey, were aghast at the idea of having to contest an election with that liability; the ‘moderates’ of the AWU were torn between their suspicion of Willis, Garden and Rosa and their contempt for the politicians. The AWU’s maverick Arthur Rae, for example, did favour the socialist objective. There were, in effect, three factions – moderates, extremists and MPs – busy organising claes and voting blocks on the floor.

The account of the Conference used here is from the new organ of the ALP, Labor News, which reproduced the report from The Australian Worker in its entirety. Although both journals were ultimately under the control of the AWU, the account is reasonably unbiased. I have preferred to use the Labor News version merely because the quality of paper and print made it easier to reproduce.

The Conference was held during the main impact of the ‘Spanish flu’ epidemic, although the most severe public health precautions were not yet in place. If they had been, the Conference would not have been held at all. Party President, JH Lambert, contracted the flu during the last few days of the Conference (which led to an argument about who should occupy the chair in his place which sparked the walkout of the extremists). Lambert recovered to take the chair in 1920, but, at the end of the first week of this Conference, Lawrence O’Hara, the Labor candidate who had just won a by-election for the seat of Paddington, died of influenza at the age of 30 without ever taking his seat in Parliament.

At the end of this chapter I have added the “Official Manifesto by the New South Wales Central Executive to the Members of ALP Branches and Affiliated Unions”, which is an account of the split in Conference and Executive from the perspective of the AWU. For another contemporary account of the factional warfare in the party during 1919, read the Third and Last Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Industrial Vigilance Council, with official report of disbandment, 1919, which is reproduced in the next chapter. Official histories, of course, are written by winners, not losers.
Executive Report of ALP,
NSW Branch, for 1918

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
The 28th Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Political Labor Movement of New South Wales is herewith submitted for your consideration.

Conferences
State
Like the Annual Conference of 1917, that of 1918 did not assemble until June, the delay being caused by the unsettled state of the political situation.

A considerable amount of uncertainty and distrust was caused throughout the unions by the action of Mr Beeby and his colleagues in their amendment of the Industrial Arbitration Act (1918), wherein for absolutely no purpose whatever, except that of seeking party advantage, Mr Beeby used his powers to disturb and disrupt the political status of trade unions. In order that this may be at once demonstrated or proved, why should it be illegal for a trade union to vote money to its political party, even though done with the consent of every member of the union, while the directors of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the Australian Gaslight Company, or any other monopolistic institution, is permitted to vote money from its funds to assist the National Party without even consulting its shareholders, many of whom might be Labor supporters? The Employers’ Federation levies tribute without question upon its members and supporters, and yet the Employers’ Federation is nothing except a political organisation designed and upkept for the purpose of securing political power, just the same as the Australian Labor Party’s Executive is an organisation designed and upkept for the purpose of securing Labor representation in Parliament; yet the Employers’ Federation is free and untrammeled while the Labor Party’s financial supply is absolutely prohibited. This, apparently, is the Nationalist idea of even-handed justice.
The resolutions carried at the Conference, together with the work of the Committee, will be found embodied in the 1918 edition of the Rule Book.

**Interstate**

The Seventh Interstate Labor Conference met in Perth (West Australia) in June, and was fully represented from this State, the delegates being Messrs Catts, Mutch, MLA, Power, Rae, Sutherland and Willis.

The greater part of the sittings was given to the consideration of war and peace and the attitude of the Party to the problems arising therefrom. The now celebrated peace proposals adopted by the NSW 1917 State Conference, and subsequently endorsed by practically all the State organisations, were unanimously reaffirmed without alteration, and eventually the following proposals were approved, and sent to a ballot of the whole membership of the Movement throughout Australia:

Further participation in recruiting shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) That a clear and authoritative statement be made on behalf of the Allies, asserting their readiness to enter into peace negotiations, upon a basis of no annexations and no penal indemnities;

(b) That Australia’s requirements in manpower be ascertained and met with respect to:

1. Home defence;
2. Industrial requirements.

An immediate inquiry, upon which the Australian Labor Party shall be adequately and officially represented, shall be held, and its decisions immediately given effect to.

It is perhaps to be regretted that the Perth Conference did not decide to take the responsibility of defining the attitude of the Movement towards the war and recruiting. Much may be said and written in support of the attitude taken, but still the bald fact remains that the delegates representing the high court of the Movement were assembled for the purpose of debating and declaring its attitude on all questions submitted to them. Undoubtedly the referendum is democratic, but its use for the purpose of avoiding personal responsibility on such vital questions could only result in a sharp division of opinion being expressed.

Another matter of the utmost importance dealt with was the future relationship between the State and the Commonwealth. A policy of unification was definitely decided, leaving the details for future determination.

Strong resolutions were also carried in opposition to Imperial Federation in any shape or form.
The policy in regard to defence was drastically changed from that now on the Statute book. Boy-conscription was sought to be abolished, and the whole Defence Act to be so democratised that the now discredited Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) was aghast at the proposals.

The matter of dealing with war loans and other financial problems was relegated to a committee for report.

Finally it was decided to recommend a Special Interstate Conference, to be held in Sydney in June 1919, to deal with this and other post-war problems.

*The War*

The cessation of hostilities of the world-war is something to be thankful for. The madness that has been rife since 1914 is abated, and civilisation faces 1919 with the hope that out of the travails of horrors the world will emerge free from the dread scourge of war for the future. Be that as it may, we know that the conditions of life and its maintenance in Middle Europe had become so strenuous that the peoples of the Central Empires refused to further fight, and the decision of the workers of Germany and Austria, no doubt actuated by the developments in Russia, to cease fighting, has saved civilisation. The pursuit of the war to the "bitter-end" was a madness that could have no other effect but the destruction of the people engaged in it.

November 11, 1918, will be one of the most memorable days in history, commemorating the signing of the great armistice. The enormous loss of life will never perhaps be fully realised. The Australian casualties will serve as a small indication of what the white man has been called upon to endure. Out of a population of something like 5,000,000; situated some 12,000 miles from the theatres at war, Australia has subscribed to 31/12/18 as officially advised:

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<th>Officers</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<td>Embarked (including Rabaul)</td>
<td>8067</td>
<td>321,615</td>
<td>329,682</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number returned</td>
<td>3361</td>
<td>76,438</td>
<td>79,795</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number abroad</td>
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<td>Number dead</td>
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<tr>
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In addition, there are approximately at sea 30,000 troops returning to Australia.
The British Elections

As a war measure, the life of the British Parliament, in order to secure the coordination of the nation’s effort, was extended, but quite recently an election was decided upon. There is a distinct feeling in Australia that the elections were rushed in order that full advantage might be taken of the bewildered state of the public mind. It remains to be seen whether the taking of such advantage of the abnormal conditions of the people after the enormous sacrifices they had made, and the fulsome promises that had been given them, will not bear its own fruit. The cabled utterances of the Prime Minister, Mr Lloyd George, “May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, etc.”, if correct, is indicative of an hysterical disquietude that does not bode well for the future.

Peace Conference

Up to the time of writing the Peace Conference, which is to sit at Versailles, had not been called together. The world will watch with intense interest the fate of the famous “Fourteen Points” enunciated by President Wilson, and to which Germany agrees:

Terms stated in address to Congress on January 8, 1918:

“I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

“II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international covenants.

“III. The removal, as far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

“IV. Adequate guarantee given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

“V. A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

“VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.
“VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

“VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

“IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognised lines of nationality.

“X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.

“XI. Roumania, Servia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Servia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan States to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan States should be entered into.

“XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely un molested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to ships and commerce of all nations, under international guarantees.

“XIII. An Independent Polish State should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

“XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike.

The workers of the world will be much influenced by the manner in which these points are adhered to, observed, or treated. There is no doubt that if the Conference displays an honest and genuine desire to arrange the future conduct of the nations in the interest of all, much will be achieved towards the establishment of stable Government. That there can be no misinterpretation of the real or spiritual meaning of President Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” is assured by his comprehensive amplification on three different occasions, as follows:-
“Principles enumerated in address before Congress, February 11, 1918:

“First. That each part of the final settlement must be based upon the essential justice of that particular case and upon such adjustments as are most likely to bring a peace that will be permanent.

“Second. That peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power; but that,

“Third. Every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the population concerned and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival States; and

“Fourth. That all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world.”

On July 4, 1918, in an address at Mount Vernon: “These are the ends for which the associated peoples of the world are fighting and which must be conceded them before there can be peace:

“I. The destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere that can separately, secretly, and of its own single choice disturb the peace of the world; or, if it cannot be presently destroyed, at the least its reduction to virtual impotence.

“II. The settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship, upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned, and not upon the basis of material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery.

“III. The consent of all nations to be governed in their conduct towards each other by the same principles of honor and of respect for the common law of civilised society that governs the individual citizens of all modern States in their relations with one another, to the end that all promises and covenants may be sacredly observed, no private plots or conspiracies hatched, no selfish injuries wrought with impunity, and a mutual trust established upon the handsome foundation of a mutual respect for right.

“IV. The establishment of an organisation of peace which shall make it certain that the combined power of free nations will check every invasion of right and serve to make peace and justice the more secure by affording a definite tribunal of opinion to which all must submit and by which every international readjustment that cannot be amicably agreed upon by the people directly concerned shall be sanctioned.”

On September 27, in Liberty Loan address in New York:

“These, then, are some of the particulars, and I state them with the greater confidence because I can state them authoritatively as representing this Government’s interpretation of its own duty with regard to peace:
“First. The impartial justice meted out must involve no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we do not wish to be just. It must be a justice that plays no favorites and knows no standard but the equal rights of the several peoples concerned.

“Second. No special or separate interest of any single nation or any group of nations can be made the basis of any part of the settlement which is not consistent with the common interests of all.

“Third. There can be no leagues or alliances or special covenants and understandings within the general and common family of the League of Nations.

“Fourth. And, more specifically, there can be no special, selfish, economic boycott or exclusion except as the power of economic penalty by exclusion from the markets of the world may be vested in the League of Nations itself as a means of discipline and control.

“Fifth. All international agreements and treaties of every kind must be made known in their entirety to the rest of the world.”

**Labor Peace Proposals Vindicated**

Our records show the formulation and adoption of the now famous Peace proposals in June, 1917. The amount of wild talk and obloquy heaped upon the heads of Labor; the wild charge of disloyalty and treason to the Empire is too well known. Now, however, we find in the December issue of no less a journal than the arch-Imperialistic champion, *The Round Table*, that “THERE CAN BE, IN FACT, NO GREAT OBJECTION URGED AGAINST THE ACTUAL TERMS OF THE PEACE PROGRAMME OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY”. The journal goes on to show that our proposals are almost identical with those of the Allied statesmen. It is interesting to record that no recognised proposals were enunciated by Allied statesmen until some seven months after the world-wide publication of this great tribute to the genius of Australian Labor.

**Russia**

The workers of Australia have done well in refusing to accept the Northcliffe-moulded bourgeois judgment in connection with the portentous happenings in Russia. Australia’s daily press appears to overlook the weight of the axiom “That things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another”. The great personality of the Australian, which has made him famous throughout the world, still stands between him and the acceptation of the silly and contradictory statements which are from day to day published concerning events in Russia.

In the near future an extension of the citizen-governed area, perhaps embracing the whole of Europe, may be looked for. Time alone will tell. One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that the Australian workers
are utterly disgusted with the slanderous attacks and vilification of the Bolshevik movement in Russia.

The sympathy of all fair-minded peoples must go out to the Russians in their struggle to throw off the inhuman yoke of Capitalism.

**Federal Party**

**War Precautions Act**

The Nationalist Party, under Mr Watt, has not in any way improved its position in the estimation of the people. On the contrary, its almost every act but serves to make its record more unworthy. Extremities of measures and actions appear to be the watchword it has adopted.

A few weeks after the declaration of war the Government, at short notice, asked Parliament for extensive powers, ostensibly for dealing with enemy subjects, and for the protection of wharves, docks, etc. Unfortunately, the members of Parliament lent too willing an ear to the tale of the Cabinet, and as a result the War Precautions Act, embodying far-reaching powers, was incautiously granted. It was not long before it was made perfectly clear that the powers conferred on the Government for the purposes of protecting the citizens from the operations of enemy subjects were also to be used for the repression of all Australians who dared to criticise or raise their voice against the Government. Some hundreds of regulations were issued under this Act, and government was, in effect, transferred from Parliament to the Ministers comprising the Cabinet. Prosecutions were rife, and every effort was made to prevent effective criticism of the Government. The summary arrest and interment, without charge or trial, of several prominent Australians, notably Mr JM Scott, will serve as an everlasting illustration of the danger and unwisdom of placing autocratic powers in the hands of any party.

Australia on two occasions absolutely and definitely refused to countenance militarism, yet in face of this mandate, twice repeated, the military power was exercised with an arbitrary force that will fully justify a most exhaustive inquiry concerning its administration. Here it might well be asked what would have been the social and industrial conditions of the people had the electors been misguided enough to have accepted the militaristic proposals of the National Party?

**The Censor**

Australia, in addition to suffering the restraints imposed by the misuse of the War Precautions Act, is still under the heel of the censor. Innumerable instances are on record of the base political purposes to which this office has been subverted, but, notwithstanding the many protestations, party political use is mainly the service it performs. If any really searching inquiry is instituted concerning administrative misdoings
during the currency of the war, no such inquiry would be complete unless it included the censor and his office.

**Wireless**

The public is regarding with cynical amusement the neurotic action of the Government in so hastily dumping its erstwhile colleague, the Minister for Customs, consequent upon adverse criticism contained in the report of the Naval Commission, especially that part dealing with the acquisition of the extensive wireless works, engineering shops and plant, covering a large area at Randwick.

In considering this question, the fact should not be lost sight of that the acquisition of the works, material, and plant, in full working order, was secured at a period in the world’s history when all the purchasing power of money would not have availed to instal if the material had had to be purchased in the open markets of the world. As an instance of the fallacy of the valuation considered by the Commission, a steel tower, 250 feet high, was put in at £250, or at the rate of £1 per foot, when £10 would have been nearer the mark. In other words, the Government secured for £250 what cost, in labor and material, some £2500 at pre-war prices. If other valuations are in similar ratio, the hysterical act of the Government can only be regarded as “acute dementia”.

The circumstances which led to the resignation of Senator Long, though they may have justified his action, bring into clear relief the hypocrisy of the Nationalists as a party, State and Federal, and show without question the existence of the class and party bias which influences all their actions. The vacancy in the Senate was a Labor vacancy, and all honest persons will at once concede that a Labor Senator should have been appointed, but in Tasmania the Nationalists were in power, and that power was used to further the party ends, without any consideration of the moral claims of justice and equity, as instanced by the selection of a member of their own party.

**Repatriation**

Generous support was given by the Labor Party to the proposals submitted by the Government for the reinstatement into civil life of returned men. All money asked for was freely voted. A special Minister was appointed to attend to this work. A Central Committee, sitting in Melbourne, with large committees and almost innumerable sub-committees in each State, has been created to attend to the wants of returned soldiers. Great care is exercised by the Minister and his committees to avoid interference in the slightest degree with vested interests. In most cases such high prices have been paid for land that it is doubtful if the returned men can make good be they never so industrious. Grave dissatisfaction is rampant at the delay in securing returned men suitable
positions. What will happen when the boys are returned as it is expected they will be during 1919, at the rate of 20,000 per month?

An important section of the work of repatriation is that provided for under the War Service Homes Act. Under this measure a Commissioner, with extensive powers, is to be appointed. He may purchase existing houses, pay off existing mortgages, or erect new houses on land already owned by the soldier, or he may purchase small or large areas of land and erect new houses thereon, as may be determined. The total advance to any one person is not to exceed £700. It is purely a business proposition, and provision is made whereby the land, together with the house thereon, may become the freehold property of the returned man by payment in instalments extending over a period of some 37 years. The Labor Party made every effort to provide that in no case should the area of a returned soldier’s home be less than 32 perches or five homes to an acre; but this the Government opposed, both for homes to be acquired or built either on lands supplied by the State or on Commonwealth lands at Canberra or the Northern Territory.

**Electoral Amendment**

During the last election campaign fears were frequently expressed that the return of a National Government would mean interfering with the Electoral Law. Following upon the election of the Labor nominee for Swan this fear was realised by the Government introducing the bill providing for the introduction of preferential voting for the election of members to the House of Representatives, the abolition of absentee voting, and the reintroduction of the postal vote.

No serious objection was taken to the enactment of the preferential system of voting, but our long experience of the postal vote and the many facilities offered for irregular, if not criminal, practices, made it necessary to oppose it at every stage. The Government, however, were easily able to carry this objectionable provision. While it remains on the Statute Book, Labor must endeavor to utilise the method where necessary. Absentee voting has been repealed.

**Pensions**

Repeated efforts were made to induce the Government to increase the Invalid and Old-Age Pensions, but without success. As a contrast, and also to show to what lengths capitalistic-controlled Governments are prepared to go, the case of Chief Justice Griffith deserves recording:

The judgments of Chief Justice Griffith are alone responsible for the restrictions of the Federal Constitution. The late Hon. BR Wise was never tired of stating that not 4 per cent of the constitutional authorities throughout Britain and her self-governing Dominions agreed with the findings of Chief Justice Griffith in regard to the Federal Constitution.
Capitalism has great cause to be grateful to Chief Justice Griffith, and, notwithstanding that the high salary paid to him was for the express purpose of obviating the payment of pensions, this reactionary and upright Judge, together with the Nationalist Government, treats as a scrap of paper the understanding that the emolument covered. The press, the Judge, and the Government constantly call upon the common people to economise, while, in silence from the press, the Government gives and the Judge takes £1750 per year of the people's money. To give some show of right to this questionable dealing, the Government introduced a bill and used the majority given to it to “win the war” to push it through. The claims of the old and the invalid, in view of the necessity to economise, could not be considered. Of such is the Kingdom of Capitalism.

War Loans
Due to the persistent advocacy of a number of members of the Party, and to the consequent development of public opinion, the Government decided that the interest payable on the last war loan floated, and a subsequent issue be liable to payment of income tax; but, in order that the welfare of the money-lenders be not seriously affected by the alteration, the rate of interest was increased from 4½ per cent, to 5 per cent.

National Taxation
The methods of the British Government to raise national revenue continue to be followed by that of Australia.

It was found that there would be a gap of £6,000,000 in the 1918-19 accounts, and, instead of boldly insisting that the wartime profits, the big incomes, and large landed estates should pay, it was decided to only levy, comparatively speaking, nominal amounts in these directions, and to secure the balance by taxing 3d and 6d picture show tickets, etc., and imposing ½d war stamp tax on letters. These are the taxes that fall most heavily on the poorer section of the community; but the people of Australia returned a National Government to office, therefore such inhuman discrimination is to be expected.

There is a strenuous time ahead. The Federal Government, constituted as it is, cannot tap any of the great hoards of wealth. Its obligations are colossal, but it will endeavor to discharge one by the invasion of another. Only a few short years ago (1909) Mr Deakin, in his efforts to serve capitalistic masters, strained every nerve and ruined himself physically and politically in the endeavor to place the 25/- per capita provision of the State share of the customs revenue in the Constitution, and so give it permanency. In this he had the whole daily press of Australia behind him. The Labor Party, realising the stupid and underlying dishonesty of the proposal, prevented it, and, coming to office in its turn, placed a 10 years’ proviso by Act of Parliament in its place. The grim
satire of the Nationalists being the first to take advantage of Labor’s wisdom, with the unanimous approval of that same capitalist press, is surely worthy of pride of place in the archives of Tophet.

Ten years ago, according to the great dailies, the financial future of the States must be assured, therefore it must go in the Constitution. Today these ultra-Imperialists who are shocked and soul-harrowed at the idea of pledges being broken by anyone but themselves are vociferously applauding Mr Watt’s “fine” decision to curtail and finally “cease payment”.

Verily the scrap of paper stunt is in danger of being over-worked in Australia.

**The Phantom Ministry**

It is very disquieting to report that Messrs Hughes and Cook are still in Great Britain. It is also authoritatively announced that Senator Pearce is to join his colleagues at the other side of the world. The presence of three Ministers of the Federal Ministry in Great Britain will permit of Executive meetings being held, regulations being passed, and, in effect, may mean the transferring of the seat of Government from Australia to London.

To such a pass have these Nationalist “Win-the-War” Imperialistic Federation fanatics brought Australia. Subject as they no doubt will be to insidious Imperial influence, it is no exaggerated picture to say that the future is fraught with the gravest possibilities. That three political adventurers, such as Hughes, Cook, and Pearce undoubtedly are, have been allowed to leave this continent with the comprehensive and dangerous powers of being able to legislate at some 12,000 miles distant is, perhaps, without parallel in the history of the world.

**State Party**

The records of the year just concluded show clearly that the Labor Party had a particularly busy time in opposing measures introduced by the National Government. At the beginning of the year the Government pretended to despise the Opposition because of its numerical weakness.

The Party consists of thirty-two members all told; but of these two, Messrs Dunn and G Cann, were on active service, and a couple of others, including the late C Fern, were prevented from participating in the Parliamentary conflicts by virtue of ill-health. One can readily understand that in a House constituted of 90 members, it is somewhat difficult for a fighting force of some twenty-eight members to make its presence felt, nevertheless it became apparent before the close of the session that the Government found it necessary to respect in no small degree the band of enthusiastic Laborites who constitute the Opposition. Many instances to prove this can be quoted. It was undoubtedly mainly due to the splendid fight put up by the Labor Party that the Government delayed the final passage of the notorious Anti-Sedition Bill. In the final
days of the session the caustic criticism of members of the Opposition undoubtedly had the effect of compelling the Government to withdraw the Public Service Bill, which provided for the displacement, without trial, of the three Public Service Commissioners.

**Arbitration**

The amending Arbitration Bill, introduced early in the year, provoked considerable debate. Many of its clauses were particularly obnoxious to the Labor Movement as a whole. The provision in the Bill making it impossible for unions to impose a levy for political purposes was unquestionably aimed at the financial basis of the ALP Movement. This was strongly opposed by every member of the Labor Party, but, unfortunately, the overwhelming majority that the Government commands prevailed, and as a result additional difficulties now confront the Executive of the Movement in the task of conducting a successful campaign.

**IWW Commission**

Probably nothing has created greater public interest during the past few months than the inquiry into the police methods in their conduct of the now notorious IWW cases. Although holding nothing in common politically with the IWW men who had been sentenced, a strong feeling existed in the ranks of the Labor Party that the convictions had been made on evidence of an unsatisfactory character, and there was a unanimous feeling that in the interests of justice and in order to allay the public unrest, a searching inquiry should be instituted into the whole case. The limitation of the scope of the inquiry had the effect of producing a report that will be generally considered unsatisfactory. However, it redounds to the credit of the Party that, although politically opposed to the men concerned, they did everything possible to secure for them fuller provision of justice than had been meted out to them originally.

**The Anti-Sedition Bill**

This remarkable project was launched by the National Government ostensibly with the object of disfranchising disloyal subjects. The Bill received severe criticism at the hands of everybody. It was obviously an attempt on the part of the Government to remove from their path dangerous political opponents who could easily have been convicted under the War Precautions Act for making statements alleged to be prejudicial to the interests of the country, when, as a matter of fact, the statements would have been substantially true. So strong was the opposition to this measure in the House that, after being mutilated and withdrawn on several occasions, the National Party eventually decided to permit it to remain in the Upper House without bringing it to completion.
**Amending Electoral Bill**

Acting under the pressure of various outside organisations, the Government, after much internal wrangling, came down with a Bill to alter the whole of our long-established method of election procedure. Single electorates have been abolished and large areas substituted, returning five members for the city and three members for country divisions. The principle of proportional representation has been included in the Bill, and thus minorities will have the right for the first time to political representation. This measure is likely to have far-reaching effects. The principle itself is sound, but it is likely to be found harassing and confusing to the electors generally. The opposition of the Labor Party to the Bill was confined to the impracticability of the system in such a huge State as New South Wales, and additionally because it is generally felt that there has been no mandate from the people for an electoral change of this character. It is obvious that a considerable amount of instruction will need to be given to the voting public in order to avoid an undue proportion of informal votes. The outstanding feature of the introduction of this Bill is the fact that it was only presented to the Assembly during the last few days of the session, and although generally admitted to be of considerable importance and very contentious in character, the Government forced the provisions of the Bill through the House by the frequent use of the gag in the small hours of the morning after a very limited discussion. It would appear to be the last despairing effort of a Government in an attempt to evade an inevitable defeat.

**Land for Soldiers**

A feature of the year’s legislation has been the acquisition of a considerable number of estates for the settlement of returned soldiers. The principle of this was not, of course, combated by the Labor Party, but grave doubts exist in the minds of members of the Opposition whether such resumptions have been made at equitable prices and on a basis that will permit the settler to earn a living. These doubts become accentuated by the many reports from various country districts questioning the bargains that have been made by the Government of the day, and it would appear that it will be absolutely impossible to provide anything like sufficient land for the returned applicants at the high prices now ruling. This fact further emphasises the virtue of the Labor Party’s policy of non-alienation of land from the Crown, and it is deplorable to realise that in order to settle a handful of men on suitable country in this huge State that the Government is compelled to go cap in hand to the private landowner and to pay him exorbitant prices for land, the value of which has in many instances been created by Government public works.
Public Service Commission

The concluding two days of the session were responsible for a remarkable and unprecedented action on the part of the National Government. Following on the report of a Commissioner who had been appointed to inquire into the Public Service, the Government came down with a Bill providing for the displacement of the three present Public Service Commissioners. They had the cool audacity to request the House to suspend the Standing Orders in order that the Bill might be taken through all its stages in one sitting. The Bill itself provided for power to be given to the Ministry to appoint a new Board at increased rates of salary. Naturally, the Opposition strongly objected to any such proceeding, and the members of the Public Service Board requested that they might be represented at the bar of the House by Counsel. This request was very reluctantly acceded to by the Ministry. So strong was the objection to the methods of the Government in this matter that after some discussion the Government withdrew the Bill.

By-Elections

During the year three vacancies were created in the House, one by the resignation of Mr Abbott, of the Upper Hunter, and two by the deaths of two esteemed Laborites, C Fern, of Cobar, and GTC Miller of Monaro. The Government recognised the futility of contesting the Cobar seat, and Mr MA Davidson was elected unopposed to succeed Mr Fern. In the two contests that ensued Labor emerged with flying colors. At the last general election Mr Abbott had been elected to support the National Government with a majority of nearly 800. In the by-election contest, although the Government retained the seat, Captain Toombs, the Labor candidate, was defeated by less than 300 votes, showing a substantial increase in the Labor vote in the district. The election at Monaro to fill the vacancy created by Mr Miller’s death, resulted in Mr J Bailey, the Labor candidate, securing an even larger majority than had Mr Miller at the general election. In view of the fact that the electorate was absolutely flooded by Ministers of the Crown, members of the National Party, and literature in abundance, this increased vote in a rural constituency is intensely gratifying to the Labor Movement.

Municipal

The Municipal Council Party’s work for the term just ended has been of much advantage to the workers. It is true that only 10 of a Council of 26 were pledged Labor men. Nevertheless, by the presentation of a solid and determined front, the party was largely responsible for much beneficial legislation. The election of practically a Labor majority of the Council on December 2 was the recognition by the citizens of the necessity for an intelligent and progressive government of the city’s
affairs. The first test of strength was decided by the election of the Lord Mayor, which resulted in the election of the nominee of the Labor Municipal Caucus.

Notwithstanding the prejudiced utterances of both Federal and State Governments and the further misrepresentation by the press, the Council adhered to the principle of preference to unionists, and during 1918 the bulk of the Council’s work was done by day labor. This was made possible largely by the unsatisfactory nature of work performed under the contract system.

This victory of Labor opens a wide field for useful work in the interests of the citizens. Too long has the Council represented the vested interests of property. With monopolistic corporations threatening the very vitals of the city, the Council majority may well be used to not only secure cheap and pure food, but also should be able to clip the wings of the profiteers operating in the supply of all necessary services.

Mr Justice Street’s Commission on Police Methods

After much agitation and the exercise of public opinion, the Holman-Fuller Government was at last shamed into granting an inquiry into the alleged bribery of the police in the cases of the IWW men now imprisoned, but well did they realise the thinness of the ice over which they were invited to skate. The more that this case is probed the worse indeed does it appear.

We have heard much concerning the dignity of the Bench and the probity of the Judges, but perhaps since the public have had the spectacle of Mr Justice Street, a Judge of the Supreme Court Bench, so lost to that self-respect which should be without exception one of the most jealously guarded attributes of the judiciary, accepting from the Government the direction of the course of the commission he undertook, the less said about these “great qualities” the better.

The reservations and guarded report of Mr Justice Street will serve as an everlasting monument to the servility for which even Judges can be remarkable, though the result of such servility involves the liberty and perhaps the very lives of fellow citizens.

No unbiased person could read the evidence and the report of Mr Justice Street without being more than assured of the necessity for a full and complete inquiry into the cases of the unfortunate IWW men.

List of Branches Endorsed During the Year

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West Narrabri  Namoi  Gwydir
Werris Creek  Tamworth  New England
West End, Armidale  Armidale  New England
Willow Tree  Upper Hunter  New England
Wills Ward, Broken Hill  Willyama  Barrier
Wingham  Gloucester  Cowper
Yerranderie  Wollondilly  Werriwa

**Sunday Night Lectures**

Owing to the exceedingly hot weather, which was considered to be militating against the attendances, your Executive decided to postpone the Sunday evening lectures until further notice. The following were the lectures delivered:-

Lecturer: CH Currey

20 — “Strike and Its Results.”  
Lecturer: AC Willis

27 — “Policy of the British Labor Movement in War Time.”  
Lecturer: Gordon Childe

*Feb. 3* — “Australian National Sentiment.”  
Lecturer: SA Rosa

10 — “Living Wage, Its Origin and Effects.”  
Lecturer: TP Holloway

17 — “Guilty, or Not Guilty.”  
Lecturer: HE Boote

24 — “The Rights of Labor.”  
Lecturer: AARutherford

*Mar. 3* — “National Insurance, a Necessary Provision for the Workers.”  
Lecturer: JP Osborne, MLA

10 — “Orators and Oratory.”  
Lecturer: RW Cruickshank

17 — “The Industrial Outlook.”  
Lecturer: — Bland, WEA

24 — “Disease (Bodily and Social) v. Health.”  
Lecturer: Dr CS Thompson

31 — “Proportional Representation.”  
Lecturer: AG Huie

*April 7* — “The War of the Classes.”  
Lecturer: AA Rutherford

14 — “Man in Relation to the Universe.”  
Lecturer: Chas E Pumfrey

21 — “The Anzac Abroad.”  
Lecturer: Corporal Murphy

28 — “The Religion of Tom Paine.”  
Lecturer: F Cotton

*May 5* — “Disease (Bodily and Social) v. Health.” (Concl).  
Lecturer: Dr GS Thompson

12 — “The Theatre and Labor.”  
Lecturer: Montgomery Stuart

19 — “Criticism of the Present Day Jail System.”  
Lecturer: Vance Marshall
LABOR PAINS VOLUME IV

26 – “Some Aspects of the French Revolution.”
W Davies, MLA

June 2 – “High Cost of Living.”
R Kleinsmith

9 – General Welcome to Delegates.
Various Speakers

16 – “Dangers of Imperialism.”
SA Rosa
(interrupted by police and soldiers)

23 – “Man in relation to the Universe.”
Chas E Pumfrey

A Blakeley, MHR

July 7 – “A Thousand Years of Labor History.”
Frank Cotton

14 – “Workmen’s Compensation.”
E Ryan

21 – “Interstate Conference.”
JH Catts, MHR

28 – “The Certainty of Imperial Federation in some Form or Degree, and Its Inevitable Disastrous Effects – Political, Social, and Economic – upon Australia Immediately, and upon the Empire Ultimately.”
WJ Miles

Aug. 4 – “Interstate Conference.” (Concluded)
JH Catts, MHR

11 – “Some Aspects of the IWW Cases.”
TD Mutch, MLA

18 – “Holman’s Proposed Anti-Sedition Bill.”
Capt. S Toombs

25 – “The Hopes, Fears, and Economics of the One Big Union.”
AA Rutherford

Sept. 1 – “The Land Question from Labor’s Standpoint.”
Frank Cotton

8 – “Freedom of Speech.”
VG Childe

15 – “Reaction Against the State.”
Prof. RP Irvine

22 – “The Church and the Labor Movement.”
FT Walker

29 – “National Guilds.”
AC Willis

Oct. 5 – “Empire Wreckers – Round Table Secrets.”
WJ Miles

13 – “The War and Education.”
CH Murphy

SA Rosa

27 – “Law, Love, Lies, and the One Big Union.”
AA Rutherford

Nov. 3 – Conscription in Operation – The World’s Need for Disarmament.”
Stanley F Allen

10 – “The Catholic Church and Labor.”
Rev. PF Tighe, SJ

17 – “Some Aspects of the Guild System.”
Rev. Portus

24 – “A League of Nations.”
CH Currey

Dec. 1 – “Houses Must be Found for the Senator Grant

100
Workers.”

8 — “Cooperation.” W Davies, MLA
15 — “The Jerry Building Trinity.” RA McAuley
22 — “The Class Struggle and the Prince of Peace.” Rev. FT Walker

“Men’s Own.”

Finance

Including the sum of £1361 ls 2d brought forward from 1917, the total receipts from all sources for the year ending December 31, 1918, were

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The total expenditure for the same period being

Leaving a balance at bankers of

Against this, however, there are accounts payable, amounting in all to some £674 13s 2d; but there is also a considerable sum outstanding re fees etc. from unions and branches, approximating £1322 12s 11d.

As previously stated, the unwarrantable interference by the Government with the financial affairs of the unions has created a position of some difficulty, which sooner or later will have to be faced in a determined manner.

The establishment of the Labor News also marks a great departure, and the initiation has, of course, been more or less a drain upon our funds. It is hoped, however, that the New Year will see this venture on a self-supporting basis.

Executive Attendances

As the period covering the election of the Executive only dates from June, a report of the attendances of the various members will be compiled and submitted to the Conference, together with other matters of detail.

WH Lambert, Secretary.
PC Evans, General Secretary.
Macdonell House, Pitt Street, Sydney.
31st December, 1918.
Annual Conference of ALP, NSW Branch, 1919
(The Australian Worker, 12 & 19 June 1919; Labor News, 14 & 21 June 1919)

Day 1, Saturday, 7 June 1919

NSW Labor Conference. Trials of strength between opposing sections. Proposals for new objective and to alter mode of electing Executive defeated.

Nearly two hundred delegates were present when the President of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party, Alderman WH Lambert, opened the Annual Conference at the Trades Hall last Saturday afternoon (June 7). Gradually, as the afternoon wore on the number of delegates increased. By the time the evening session was well in progress the hall was crowded beyond comfort. Included in the gathering were many prominent members of the Movement, along with State and Federal Labor politicians.

There was an air of expectancy about the Conference, and it was obvious to all that the great part of the first session would be devoted to estimating the strength of the various sections bidding for control – the organising of which had been taking place during the week prior to the opening of the Conference. Feeling ran high, and several times there were exciting verbal duels between the several parties. Progress votes cast by the parties were received with thunderous applause when they showed an advance on earlier figures.

Prior to the official opening of Conference, the President referred briefly to the Freeman case, and a motion of protest – which is included elsewhere in this issue – was carried unanimously.

The election of the several committees took up most of the afternoon session. For the Credentials Committee Messrs Arthur, Bramston, McGrath, Sutherland, and Treflé were elected. It was clearly a victory for the moderate wing of the Conference, as was also the election of the Agenda Committee, to which Messrs Toombs, Willis, Carey, Farrell, and Miss Cashman were elected. Miss Matthews was elected Minute Secretary; Mr Fitzgerald Timekeeper; and Messrs Weston and Carney were appointed Doorkeepers.
President’s Address

In addressing the Conference, the President detailed the happenings of the Movement since the close of the previous year’s Conference. He said: “Since the Conference of the Movement some twelve months back I am glad to say that it has successfully weathered all storms, and has made rapid progress, particularly in the direction of extending and solidifying its organisation, and from that point of view the Movement is in a better position today than at any time in its history hitherto. New Branches have been established in practically every part of the State where none existed previously, and old ones resuscitated.

Beeby’s Coercion Bill

“I regret to say, however, that the Holman Government’s Amended Industrial Arbitration Act of recent date (now commonly known as Beeby’s Coercion Bill) has caused the Movement a good deal of concern as regards the matter of the affiliation of the trade unions, and, as a corollary, as regards finance.

“Delegates are doubtless aware that the bill referred to absolutely debars the trade unions from financially assisting the Political Labor Movement from their funds. Prior to the passing of this bill, trade unions were at liberty to assist the organisation financially, and pay their affiliation fees from their funds; but now, under this Act, they are unable to do so. A big percentage of the funds of the Labor Movement was obtained from the trade union movement previously, but under the present conditions not half the amount of revenue is obtainable from those sources as hitherto.

“The Industrial Arbitration Act, as it stands, is about the most class-biased piece of legislation on the statute books of any country in the world, and is certainly a disgrace to this State and to Australia. It is a direct blow at the Political Labor Movement of the State, and a blow at the liberty of the people and an insult to their intelligence. It should certainly be wiped off the statute book on the first opportunity.

“The so-called Nationalist Government have not passed any legislation to prohibit the capitalists and their organisations of employers donating funds and financing the National Political Party and their electioneering campaigns. Why should there be legislation interfering with the rights of organised labor in this direction, especially when such legislation was passed by our political opponents for political advantages and purposes? Notwithstanding the disabilities placed on, and the injustice done to, the trade unions and the Political Labor Movement on the lines indicated, it is satisfactory and gratifying to know that there are still more unions affiliated with the ALP than previously, and practically every union in the State is anxious to affiliate, and will do so on the first opportunity.
**Bogus National Government**

“It is gratifying to know that the people generally now realise to a greater extent than ever before the bogus nature of the so-called National Government in this State and in the Commonwealth Parliament. Their class-biased legislation and utter inability to fairly and competently administer the affairs of the State and Commonwealth has disgusted every fair-minded man and woman, while their failure to deal with, or even attempt to deal with the shameless and rapacious profiteers and exploiters of the people has aroused deep resentment and dissatisfaction among the masses.

“Under the regime of the present State Government and a similar Government in the Commonwealth Parliament, the industries of the country have been paralysed. Practically the whole of the metalliferous mining industries have been knocked on the head. Almost all the public works, railway construction, etc., have been brought to a standstill, and many thousands of men suddenly thrown out of employment and left to starve with their families or to fare as best they can. Many other essential industries are in the same position, creating widespread unemployment and poverty among the people. No attempt whatever has been made to keep the mines or factories going, nor to establish essential industries in this country. The Government is 50 years behind the times and utterly incapable of properly governing the country. It is following out an old-time suicidal policy of producing raw material and exporting, and re-importing the goods when made up by foreign countries.

**Wheat Bungle**

“The Government is deserving of the severest condemnation for its absolute failure to properly handle the farmers’ wheat. As a result of their inaction and stupidity in this matter, thousands of tons of wheat have been ruined at a great cost to the country; a great part of the wheat on hand at present is not fit for pig food.

“Farmers have not obtained anyway near the price they should have obtained for their grain as a result of the Government’s incompetency and want of regard for the farmers’ interests. Regarded from all points of view, it is a public scandal, and one of the greatest bungles that has ever taken place in the history of the country.

**Victimisation**

“Right on since August, 1917, the year of the big strike, the present State Government, in conjunction with the shipping combine and coal owners, have been mercilessly and venomously persecuting and victimising the Sydney wharf laborers and coal lumpers and coal miners. Practically
every member of the Coal Lumpers’ Union has been ruthlessly victimised and prevented from obtaining employment. The same thing applies to the Sydney wharf laborers.

“The big bulk of these men have families depending on them, and great numbers of them have been hard up against it for close on two years, and their families at the point of starvation, and, in many cases, their homes broken up. I feel confident in saying that if the people throughout this State even only half realised the disgracefully vindictive and tyrannical treatment meted out to those good citizens by the National Government such a combination would stand but a very small chance indeed of finding themselves in control of the machinery of government after the next election. The people of Australia will not stand for the starvation and humiliation of women and little children, nor for the victimisation of their breadwinners merely to gratify the vengeful feelings of a class-biased Government and of a gang of profiteers.

Putting the Boot into the Workers

“The energies of the Government referred to, led by Holman, Beeby, and Fuller in this State, and by Watt, Hughes, and Cook in the Federal Parliament, have been devoted principally to putting the boot into the workers, and making the working conditions as bad as possible, with the result that there have been far more strikes, unemployment, and poverty than under any other Government in the history of the country.

Misrepresentation of Labor Movement

“During the year the same old abuse and vile misrepresentation of the Labor Movement and its objects has been carried out with greater vigor than ever by the capitalist Governments and politicians. All sorts of misleading statements have been made by them and the press in order to mislead the people for the purpose of securing a further lease of power in the interest of the class they represent. The Executive of the Movement and all those administering its affairs have been designated as propagators of everything that is foul and unjust. They have been branded as traitors, advocates of free love and rapine, and murder, etc., etc., disloyalists, enemies of the Empire, and many other things. Notwithstanding all this, the people realise that the great Labor Movement still stands for what it has always stood for, namely, liberty and justice for the people, and securing for the workers (producers) the full results of their labor. On the other hand, it is against profiteering and exploitation of the people, starvation wages, and rotten working conditions, and slums, and all other evils. It is against persecution and victimisation of the workers and the starvation of their wives and families, and the bad state of
society, industrially and socially, as we find it today under the existing Governments and their system of Capitalism.

A New But Empty Slogan

“As a result of the great Russian revolution, the Holman National Government, and all other Governments of a similar kind in Australia, have seized upon the word ‘Bolshevism’, and have endeavored to fasten it on the Labor Movement as an electioneering slogan. Directly a Labor man opens his mouth to advocate the policy and principles of the Labor Movement, the press and Tory politicians raise the cry in unison of ‘Bolshevism’ in an endeavor to stampede and mislead the people. The word ‘Bolshevism’, it is understood, is the Russian word for majority.

“Notwithstanding this, now that the IWW gag is played out, the reactionary Tory politicians, finding themselves in need of a new war cry, commenced a campaign of abuse and misrepresentation of Labor, using Bolshevism as the most promising shibboleth, until it has now become as stale as the IWW bogey, and cuts no ice.

“According to Holman and his followers, immediately a representative of the Movement, or members of trade unions seek to improve the conditions of the workers, they are Bolsheviks. Immediately a Labor man criticises the bad administration of the Government and their biased legislation, he is a Bolshevist. He also is a Bolshevist directly he raises his voice against the profiteers and the plundering of the people by the exploiters.

“If the word ‘Bolshevism’ is to be interpreted to mean what the Tory politicians say it means, then there are certainly no Bolsheviks in the Labor Movement. They are all on the other side amongst the profiteers, sweaters, and exploiters, slum owners, starvers of women and children, and ruthless persecutors and victimisers of the workers, such as the Holman Government and his followers, who can truly be termed capitalistic Bolsheviks, while, on the other hand, the Labor Movement, being the movement of the people, stands for liberty, equality, and justice, progress and prosperity, as embodied in its platform.

Termination of the War and Peace

“Since this Conference last met the great war has terminated, an armistice having been signed in November last on the lines of the Labor Movement’s peace proposals of 1917, which are practically the same as President Wilson’s fourteen points.

“From the cables in the press it seems as if the Conference now sitting in Paris has ignored a number of these points, particularly as regards no annexation and no indemnities, and it also seems that a number of the nations represented there are out to annex all the territory
they can lay their hands on. As a result of this, instead of making peace on a just and lasting basis, they are sowing the seeds of future wars and unduly penalising the workers and women and children of other lands.

“In this regard I feel sure that Conference will agree with me in condemnation. I am also confident that Conference will be with me in my wish that the terms of settlement will be on the basis of the peace proposals of the Labor Movement and President Wilson’s fourteen points, thus securing a just and lasting peace and better conditions and prosperity for mankind throughout the civilised world.

By-Elections

“At the recent by-elections for Petersham, Monaro, and Paddington, I am glad to say that Labor won by an overwhelming majority at Paddington and Monaro, Mr Jack Bailey having been returned for Monaro and Mr Larry O’Hara for Paddington by largely increased majorities in comparison with the figures of the last general elections, while, on the other hand, the Holman Government candidate only received 900 votes at Paddington and about 1600 in Monaro. At Petersham, Mr Olde, the Labor candidate, was defeated by a very narrow margin, decreasing the Liberal majority of last election by over 2000 votes.

Repatriation

“The Federal Government, with the acquiescence and endorsement of the Holman State Government, are simply tinkering with the question of repatriation of Australian soldiers, and the whole of their efforts to date in this matter have been a ghastly failure and an abominable sham. From the tactics they have pursued, it is evident that their main purpose has been to endeavor to put the returned soldiers against the citizens, instead of making an honest attempt to properly repatriate the men by creating the necessary developmental works throughout Australia to absorb every man returning, and to place on the land all those desirous of settling thereon under sane and reasonable conditions. The policy of discharging one type of worker and throwing him on the scrapheap to starve, and putting another man into his job is neither wise nor humane, and, instead of accomplishing the repatriation of the men as it should be carried out, it is merely playing to a false sentiment.

“The sacking of a few workers and putting a few returned men in their place is not the kind of repatriation that the Australian people want, nor is it what the men to be repatriated are entitled to. They are entitled to be repatriated in a much better manner than on the lines indicated. There is only one hope for the soldiers to get a square deal, and that is from the Labor Party when returned to power.
Labor in the City Council

“It should be satisfactory to know that Labor now has an equal number of members in the City Council with the Nationalists and so-called Independents combined, but is one vote in the minority on account of the Mayor having two votes. One of the first things that the Labor Party did after the Council elections was to lay down a minimum rate of pay of £3/12/- per week, regardless of the so-called minimum living wage laid down some time previously by the Board of Trade. The Party also reduced the working hours from eight to six per day of some of the men working in the power house ash filling.

“These men are working under abominable conditions, and should have had the hours reduced long ago. The reduction of hours was bitterly opposed by the Tories in the Council, and opinions expressed by them that the wages should also be reduced. Labor has in hand schemes for insurance of the Council’s own property and workmen, and purchasing its own metal quarries and coal mines, together with schemes of food control and marketing and distribution, and can be relied upon to do the best it can to give effect to the platform.

“Legislation is required to enable the Council to give effect to a number of its proposals, particularly in the case of marketing and distribution of fish and food generally. This legislation was recommended some time back by a Royal Commission. The present Government have been approached on a number of occasions to legislate in the direction indicated, but have persistently refused.

Labor Wants Money

“In the near future we shall have to fight two elections, State and Federal, and as our legitimate sources of revenue have been largely interfered with and curtailed by Beeby’s Coercion Act, supporters of the Movement require to rally to the call and see that sufficient money is subscribed to carry the campaigns on in an effective way. It will require a great deal of money to carry through those two campaigns, and I appeal to all supporters of the Movement to forward their donations to the General Secretary, ALP, at an early date from now on.

A Message of Hope

“As a result of the trials and tribulations of the working classes through over four years of Armageddon, the future augurs well for democracy, especially so as the people have benefited by the hard experience of autocratic rule, by a heartless plutocratic bureaucracy, who are mis-governing this country.
“I would exhort the people to join up with the great Australian Labor Movement, and thus secure the return of a Labor majority at the next Federal and State elections.

Immediately the President resumed his seat, Mr J Howie, President of the Labor Council of New South Wales, rose and said he desired to ask the President of the Conference if it was a fact that there had been a consultation with any other party, or parties, with a view of consolidating the Labor Movement in readiness for the coming elections. He was heard to instance (amidst uproar) the names of Carmichael and Griffith.

The President immediately jumped to his feet, and, banging the table heavily with his fist, said: “That question is a damned insult to the Movement. If you wish to insinuate that there has been a conference with any of Labor’s enemies, then I tell you it is an insult to the Chair.”

Protest Against Profiteering

After calm had been restored Mr G Saunders (Milk and Ice Carters) moved the following motion, which was carried without debate:

“That this Conference, believing it to be the first duty to all in the community (excepting the wealthy class), herein expresses its indignation at the exploitation and profiteering that, unhampered, importers, manufacturers, and wholesale distributors are at present indulging and which has continued very substantially and without justification for the past four years under the cloak of war conditions.

“That this Conference, fully realising that it is humanly impossible for the vast majority of the general public to obtain the ordinary necessities of life owing to such profiteering, in all sincerity urges the Federal Government to at once introduce legislation providing for the limitation of prices of all goods, leaving only a fair margin of profit for persons now indulging in profiteering, while, at the same time, making it an indictable offence on the part of the wholesaler or retailer to oversell or undersell.

“That these resolutions be forwarded at once to the Acting Federal Prime Minister with a request that he give them immediate and special attention, or that otherwise he and his colleagues should definitely decline to so act.”

Just prior to closing the afternoon session, the President extended an invitation to delegates to be present at a reception to be accorded them on the following (Sunday) evening. Immediately this announcement was made Mr Denford, on behalf of a section of the delegates, jumped up and asked all present to attend a counter demonstration and social gathering to be given at the Trades Hall at the same time.

On Conference re-assembling after tea on Saturday evening the President referred to the question asked by Mr Howie earlier in the
evening, as to whether a conference had been held with the leader of any other party or any other political opponent. He gave the statement an emphatic denial. He had heard during the adjournment that a report had been spread that he, in company with Mr John Storey, had had a conference with Messrs Carmichael and Griffith – for what purpose he did not know. He desired to give it an emphatic denial. The report had been spread for unscrupulous reasons. (Uproar and applause.)

There was some discussion regarding the hours of sitting, country delegates being of the opinion that there should be day sittings in order to save time and expense. It was, however, decided to revert to the usual custom of evening sittings.

**Intervention in Russia**

Mr A Rae moved the following discussion, which was carried unanimously, without debate: “This Conference emphatically protests against the action of the Allied Governments in sending armed forces to Russia for the purpose of suppressing democracy in the interests of Capitalism. We look upon such action with disgust and abhorrence, and further, we consider the Russian people should be allowed to work out their own destiny”.

A question was raised as to whether a delegate could sit on Conference representing a league the district of which he was not a resident. The President ruled that league membership carried full rights, including eligibility to be a delegate. There was some dissent, but after an explanation by Mr AC Willis (Vice-Chairman) the Chairman’s ruling was upheld by 102 to 51.

Mr J Burns then raised the question of the eligibility of the Railway and Tramway Employees’ Union being represented at Conference without the full fees being paid. This was the signal for uproar between the rival factions at Conference, during which Mr C Thompson jumped to his feet and made a heated reply, protesting at the manner in which his union was being singled out for these insinuations.

The President announced the presence of Senator Gardiner (Senate leader) and Mr J Storey, MLA (State Labor leader), and they were invited to address the Conference.

**Senator Gardiner Addresses Conference**

Senator Gardiner, who was cheered on rising, complimented the Conference as expressing Labor shown to its best advantage. He deprecated that there should be any sections in the Movement. They should get together and, instead of fighting amongst themselves, present a united front to their one political enemy. It was the earnestness of the rank and file, rather than that of the leaders, that made the Labor
Movement what it was. They were on the eve of a real fight, but how
could they fight it if they were divided amongst themselves? The
Movement wanted no direction from men who arranged things
beforehand. If they moved with one heart and one soul they could have
the biggest victory Labor had ever known. (Applause.) They would have
a revolution, but it would be a bloodless one and without violence. It all
depended on themselves. He made special reference to the Freeman case,
and how it had stirred the people against the Government, which was
responsible, but he also pointed out that other men had been held against
their will, even after they had paid their sentences in full, and deported
[departed?] to foreign lands. The greatest danger to liberty was the
growth of a system that would allow the Government to keep men in jail
without trial. If Labor organised its forces there was that force of public
opinion behind it which they could lead in maintaining, not only British,
but Australian justice. (Applause.) He implored the various parties to
sink their sectional differences and present a united front to the one
political enemy in the coming fight.

“Labor Can Win”, Says Mr Storey

Mr J Storey, MLA, (State Labor leader), said that the Conference was the
best answer to their opponents that the brains had left the Movement. He
hoped that at the end of the Conference the results of their labor would
be of such a nature as to compel Holman to retire from the political
horizon. He was opposed to factions and sections within the Movement,
and thought they could come to some reasonable agreement amongst
themselves. The task of removing the Nationalists from the State political
arena was a difficult task, and it was by no means impossible if they got
together and worked with a will in perfect harmony.

Referring to the Freeman case, Mr Storey stated that when it was a
question of trying to get this unfortunate man his liberty, Holman
pleaded that he could do nothing as it was a Federal matter. “But what
did he do”, said Mr Storey, “when the coal miners got an increase in
wages? It was also a Federal matter, but he did not hesitate to intrude to
see whether the miners were entitled to the increases they received.
Holman was ever ready to interfere in Federal matters when it suited
him.”

“Backed up by you”, said Mr Storey, in conclusion, “and the public
outside, we will be able to present such a solid front that after the next
elections we will be governing the destinies of New South Wales.”
(Applause.)
Real Business Started

There was an air of expectancy when Mr AC Willis (Illawarra Colliery Employees’ Association) rose to move the following motion: “The Executive shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, and 28 members, to be elected by a ballot of the whole of the members of leagues and affiliated unions in New South Wales, together with one member each to be elected by the State and Federal Parties respectively. The required number of officers and members receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected, and shall take office from the next following Annual Conference.”

Mr Willis said the idea the motion was to eliminate sections and cliques. Three years ago they formed a section to rid the Movement of certain undesirables, but instead of the section automatically wiping itself out, it existed today in a more subtle and cunning form. He said the time had come when the Movement should say there would be no more backing and filling. They could not afford to go to the country with their opponents saying the Movement was honeycombed by factions and cliques. At the present time it appeared to be a case of diamond cut diamond. The proposed motion would cut out all intriguing, and allow the whole of the Movement to say who would be their officers. There could be no talk of “secret junta” then by their opponents.

A Split Predicted

Amidst considerable interruption Mr Willis went on to say that three years ago would-be politicians set about ridding the Conference of control by the politicians, but they were not prepared to do the same today. He said that if this matter was defeated, then the Movement was liable to split into factions. (Cries of “Never”)

Mr Willis: “Oh, well, you can say ‘never’ as long as you like, but you’ve already seen what exists today. I want to be quite frank with you. I am a member of a section which is out to fight another section because that section is, in our opinion, out to do the Movement harm. I want a basis where we can all work together for the greater solidarity of the Movement. My section, right now, is quite prepared to attend out and say to Conference, ‘Elect the best men and we will stand behind you’. But let me tell you that if another section goes on intriguing, publishing malicious statements (uproar), then we are out to fight it. There are people in this Movement today who are sowing dissension which would cripple it.”

Mr Willis then went on to make a spirited attack against the issue of a leaflet, entitled “The Pommie Takes Command – A Warning to Australian Workers”. It was one of the vilest things he had ever read. “I challenge anybody here”, said Mr Willis, amidst considerable
interruption, “to prove anything against my character, and if they can I shall walk out of this Movement at once”.

Mr Catts Opposes the Motion

The Conference was in a highly excited state as Mr Catts, MHR, rose to reply. There was considerable interruption from the back of the hall, where a number of visitors were congregated. Matters became so bad that several times the President threatened to adjourn the Conference. Mr Catts said that the proposal would mean that the present Executive would control the Movement for the next twelve months. He was opposed to that.

Mr Willis: “It won’t. You can elect your officers with a ballot within three months.”

Mr Catts: “Nothing of the kind. A referendum would take at least 12 months. The scheme is a proposal to allow this Executive to control the Movement for the next twelve months. Every man who is decrying the politician is breaking his neck to get his seat or some other seat. Name me some of the prominent men and I’ll give you their history and what they have done to get into politics. I attended a meeting of a section which decided to adjourn until after the Conference. I voted for that decision because I wanted to see an open Conference.” At this there was a prolonged interruption, which Mr Catts denounced as being “prearranged”.

Mr Catts: “Yes, you can go on, but you all know the tactics that are taking place. When one section found the other organizing, it immediately set about to organize itself.”

The OBU and the IWW

The interruption grew more noisy and was intermixed with hoots and groans as Mr Catts went on to refer to “the OBU” adopting the IWW preamble. By adopting that preamble they fastened onto this Movement the criminal history of the IWW. (Uproar, hoots and groans and a couple of free fights commenced in the audience at the back of the hall.)

The President repeatedly clanged his gong and stated that, if order was not restored the Conference would be adjourned.

Mr Peate: “What right has Catts to brand Labor men as criminals?”

Mr Rosa, on a point of order, asked if Mr Catts was in order in dealing with the OBU and the IWW? The President allowed Mr Catts to proceed.

Mr Catts: “Not much has been done so far, but we will be foolish if we fasten the history of the IWW on to the Labor Movement, and have to apologise for it afterwards. Since last January there have been statements
that a definite move would be made to capture the Labor Movement. There have been no denials”.

Mr Rosa: “Oh, yes, Mr Garden denied it.”
Mr Garden: “That’s all right. I’ll answer him later on.”

“You Can’t Capture the Movement!”

Mr Catts: “We are determined to meet these attacks on the Labor Movement by the OBU. And let me tell you that after 12 months’ organising you have failed to capture the Movement. You cannot capture it now - and you know it.”

Mr G Burns made an interjection, to which Mr Catts replied: “Oh, you know all about it. And you know, too, that if the OBU preamble is tacked on to the Movement, you cannot win the Illawarra seat”. Mr Catts concluded by stating that the motion was impracticable; and he hoped Conference would turn it down.

Mr F Lagerlow (Municipal Employees) thought Conference should elect its own officers as in the past. Surely Conference had enough intelligence to do that. He opposed the motion.

Mr Rosa: “If Mr Catts’ statements are allowed to go unchallenged it would appear that there is some conspiracy to capture the Movement and turn it into a branch of the OBU”.

A Voice: “Garden said he would do it”.

Mr Rosa Against Cliques

Mr Rosa: “I and others are fighting against the cliquism of unscrupulous men - (laughter) - and to rid the Movement of Tammanyism”. There was a great uproar as he proceeded to deal with criminal libels on prominent men, which bore false signatures, contained false statements and false addresses, and had been circulated prior to Conference meeting. If the curts put their names to them they would have to stand in a criminal dock, and they knew it.

The President called Mr Rosa to order saying he would not allow any reflections to be made. If he had a definite charge to lay he would be allowed that privilege. There was a few moments’ interchange of heated words between the President and Mr Rosa. Proceeding, Mr Rosa said there was plenty of evidence that what was done in Tammany Hall in New York was now being done in the Movement. He made some remark about a new organisation coming into operation for the purpose of ridding the Movement of Tammanyism. He believed in the present motion, he said, and would like to see it carried. He was not pleased, personally, with the present Executive, but if necessary it could stay in power. Or, if they liked, let them elect a temporary Executive at the
present Conference until the new Executive was elected by a ballot of the rank and file.

Mr Storey Predicts Election in December
Mr Storey, MLA, asked the Conference to turn the proposition down. The motion did not do credit to the organisation which sent it along. The Conference consisted of persons elected by the very people to whom the matter would have to be referred. It seemed to him to be unnecessary. Why couldn’t delegates select the Executive officers of the Movement? Such a cumbersome proposition was not in the best interests of the Movement. He deplored that there had been a lot of argument wide of the mark. He was heart and soul in the Labor Movement, and anybody who attempted to weaken it would have him to fight, even if he stood alone. He predicted an election in December next, and wanted to have an Executive in office then. If they carried the motion there might be chaos at a time when they should be prepared for the election. If they turned the proposition down now he would be prepared to support it after the elections.

“What Are You Afraid Of?”
Mr Blakeley, MHR, was subjected to much interruption as he proceeded to refer to a motion on the agenda paper to tack the OBU preamble on to the Labor Movement. He was opposed to the scheme, as being too costly and cumbersome.

A Voice: “Doesn’t the AWU take a full vote for Executive officers every year?”
Mr Blakeley said Conference should take the responsibility of electing its officials. “What are you afraid of?” he asked.
Voices: “What are you afraid of?”
Mr Blakeley: “I’m not afraid to take responsibility for my actions. I believe the election of the Executive should be in the hands of this Conference. It was about time they threw all their cards on the table. It was evident that the section did not trust one another.”

Conference in Uproar
Mr Garden referred to statements made by Mr Catts. He stated that Mr Catts played a very prominent part at the first conference of the OBU as a representative of the AWU. “Why”, said Mr Garden, “Mr Catts produced a preamble of his own. We call it the James Catts preamble” (Laughter.)
Mr Catts, “And it was made in Australia, and not in America”. (Cheers.)
Mr Garden went on to refer to what took place at the first Congress of the OBU, and the refusal of the press to publish denials by the OBU Executive. The hall was in complete uproar, and it was impossible to hear what was being said.

When the uproar was at its highest a point of order was raised and Conference adjourned till Monday morning.

Day 2, Monday, 9 June 1919

Apparently Conference wasn’t in the mood for serious business on Monday morning, for it was well on to dinner-time adjournment before anything of a practical nature was done. A lengthy discussion centred around the question of admitting the public, and eventually it was decided to grant them admission. Both the President and Vice-President took the opportunity of warning the public that any interruption from them would lead to their being denied admittance.

It was suggested that a larger hall should be secured, in view of the crowded state of the Conference. Several halls were suggested, it being eventually decided to leave the matter of securing better accommodation in the hands of the General Secretary. The reading of correspondence to the Conference then occupied some time. Arising out of the correspondence a motion was carried allowing Mr Huie to give a demonstration of the proportional voting system to Conference – the date to be arranged by the Agenda Committee. It was moved that the Conference recommend to the Eight-Hour Committee that May Day be the annual Labor holiday. On Mr Stanbridge (Printing Trades) pointing out that there was a distinct motion on the agenda paper dealing with the matter, it was withdrawn. A proposal to take a motion picture of the Conference, put forward by a cinematograph company, was accepted – next Saturday afternoon in Hyde Park at 2 pm being fixed as the date and place.

Commission on Foundered Colliers

Arising out of a letter from Vance Marshall, of the Social Democratic League, it was decided, after a lengthy debate to take up a collection in the hall to help defray the costs of an impending Court Case.

Mr TJ Smith, MLA, moved: “That this Conference views with grave dissatisfaction the constitution of the proposed Royal Commission to inquire into the foundering of the colliers Undola, Myola and Tuggerah, with the loss of 21 lives, and demands in the public interest a commission of three thoroughly competent representatives of the seamen, shipowners and the Government to inquire fully into the matter”. The motion was carried unanimously.
Mr AE O’Brien (Musicians’ Union) moved a motion: “That Conference instructs the President to request Mr Theodore, Acting Premier of Queensland, to give further and fairer consideration to the needs of musicians and theatrical employees who are out of employment in Brisbane, owing to their places of employment being closed by the Government. The motion was carried with debate.

The afternoon session opened with a debate regarding the admittance of delegates whose league or union affiliation fees had not been paid. An overwhelming vote granted admission to the delegates of the Broken Hill District Assembly, while another motion was carried that other like cases be dealt with on their merits.

Mr Garden Justifies OBU

It was about three o’clock when the Conference livened up – resumption of Saturday night’s adjourned business being entered upon. Mr Garden was first to address the Conference, and reverting to the OBU question at the outset said that even if he had accepted the IWW preamble nothing derogatory could be found to it. “All this talk about it being an American importation”, said Mr Garden, “is nothing to us. We want the best, and we believe we have got it. We challenge our opponents to come before the public and debate the matter with us. But they are not game.”

He referred to the anonymous circulars about “Pommie” delegates that had been distributed among delegates, and said that no man was responsible for his birth. Referring to the resolution under discussion he said that he saw no objection to the rank and file deciding who their officials should be. He could not understand those who opposed such a democratic action.

Messrs Lazzarini and C Johnston, MsLA, spoke in opposition to the motion – the latter speaker stating that while no fault could be found in men who came to this country and took a prominent part in the Labor Movement there was every reason why they should strongly object to their coming here and doing something which he considered was derogatory to the Movement. While Mr Garden approved of the motion, never was he found advocating that the officials of the Labor Council should be elected in the same way.

Mr LJ O’Hara, MLA, favored the motion, claiming that it would go far towards breaking down the sections and cliques that had sprung up within the Movement. No opposition could be brought against it as a democratic measure, because it would make the Executive responsible to the rank and file and not to cliques.
“What Is Wrong With the Motion?”

Mr C Pattinson (Northern Miners), in the course of a long speech, moved a slight alteration of the motion, so as to get over the difficulty of electing the current year’s Executive. He was at a loss to understand why such a democratic measure should be opposed, because while it was true that they could intrigue at Conferences, there could be no intriguing with the rank and file. “Is there anything wrong with a scheme that gives the rank and file the right to say who their bosses will be? Here you have a chance to aim a death-blow at cliques”, he said. “It was rot to say that a referendum could not be taken. Did not the two largest unions in the State – the AWU and the Miners, elect their officials by a vote of the rank and file, and they never saw anything wrong in it? It would solidify the Movement if this right was given to the rank and file.”

Senator Grant said that while he sympathised with the motion in theory, he did not think it would work out as they thought it would. Why not go further and submit the agenda paper to the rank and file every year? The unions and leagues selected their delegates to attend Conference, yet here was a proposal to send back to them something that they selected delegates to deal with on their behalf.

Mrs Greville moved as an amendment No.40 on the agenda paper which set out that certain of the officials should be elected by Conference and others by a plebiscite of the various Federal Electorate Councils. She claimed that this was a happy medium by which all friction in the Movement could be healed.

Scheme Too Costly

Mr Cecil Last said he deprecated the introduction of irrelevant matter into the debate. He was against the motion, claiming that it was too costly and cumbersome. He claimed that Conference could cast an intelligent vote for the election of the Executive. Referring to the anonymous literature, all he had to say was that a delegate, whom he named, could not be trusted in the Movement.

Mr Shirley: “You should be made to prove your remarks”. Mr Last said he was prepared to do so. After some wordy discussion between the President and the speaker, the matter was dropped.

Speaking on the motion Mr Last said it would be too costly to take a vote of the rank and file – the money could be put to better use fighting the coming elections. There were some people who didn’t care for political action, but he wanted to see Labor win the elections and give the people sympathetic legislation and administration. There was a section which was prepared to organise a permanent split in the Movement if defeated on the floor of Conference.
After further discussion the various amendments and motion were defeated – the latter on a division of 113 to 109. There was wild cheering when the result was announced.

A Noisy Session

Last Monday night’s session was easily the noisiest since the Conference opened – it being the real test of strength between what have been referred to as the “Moderate” and “Extremist” sections of the Conference over a motion to alter the objective of the Party.

The debate livened up when a motion standing in the name of the Lithgow Branch of the ALP, having for its purpose the elimination of that portion of the objective referring to monopolies and the placing therein the Queensland objective. viz.: “The collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange” after the words, “the securing of the full results of their industry to all producers”. As there were quite a number of resolutions before Conference dealing with the objective, it was suggested that a committee should be appointed to draft an objective.

Motion to Change Party Objective

Great excitement prevailed when Mr Willis, on behalf of the Wollongong ALP, moved the following motion:

“New Plank –
(a) That the object of the party be the establishment of a State of social democracy, in which the entire means of wealth production shall be owned and controlled by the community of workers industrially organised.

(b) That this be the sole issue of future elections in order that a clear and definite mandate may be given by the electors, thus enabling the Party’s representatives, if elected, to give it legislative effect.

“That as many of the planks of the existing platform imply support of a continuance of the capitalistic system of production for profit, Conference elect a revisory committee who shall be empowered to eliminate everything incompatible with the foregoing objective, and to draft the essential component of a scheme of socialistic administration.

“That the scheme as drafted, together with an explanatory preamble, be submitted not later than one month from the expiration of Conference to the affiliated leagues and unions for their endorsement or otherwise by ballot.
“That, in the event of the foregoing series of resolutions being carried by Conference, a campaign of propaganda be commenced with the object of acquainting the general public with the changed economic circumstances engendered by the war, and which make a peaceful revolution of the social system urgent and imperative if the working classes are to escape degradation of their standard of living and a condition of servitude culminating probably in a war even more devastating than the one from which we have just emerged.”

Mr Willis, in explaining the motion, said that roughly it was that the Labor Movement should adopt as its definite objective the Socialistic objective. He had met very few Labor Parliamentarians who did not acknowledge their belief in Socialism, while the rank and file had expressed the same sentiment, and were, in fact, only looking for Conference to give them a clear lead in the matter. If the motion was adopted by Conference it would have to be submitted to the leagues and unions, who would have the final say in the matter. Nobody could object to that. He thought it was high time that the objective was adopted to keep pace with the ideals of those whom they desired to follow them.

Senator Gardiner in Opposition

Senator Gardiner, who was subjected to a great deal of interruption, said that although the league for which he was a delegate to Conference wanted an alteration to the objective, he had to admit that he was opposed to the views of his league on the matter. For instance, his league wanted the elimination of the word “Australian” and the substitution of the word “international”. He was opposed to that as he considered that Australia was good enough for all present at the Conference. It didn’t matter where they came from, Australia had a national sentiment to foster. Was anybody opposed to that? He claimed that the present objective had stood the test of time, and was wide enough and broad enough for their needs. At any rate, it was good enough to lead the Party to victory again.

Mr A Rae (AWU) favored the motion. It had been said that with the present objective the Labor Movement would go as far as they desired. Take, for instance, the question of collective ownership of monopolies – what progress had they made in that direction since Federation?

Voices: “But will the new objective do any better?”

Mr Rae Favors Socialistic Objective

Mr Rae: “We are going for democratic industrial control, so that we will own and control works, and see that they are run in a democratic way. If a man is a militant Laborite he wants to be able to tell at a glance the
Labor platform from the Liberal platform, and that without a microscope. At the present time he had to be pretty well educated to see where the main difference is.” Mr Rae went on to say that he favored the straight-out socialistic objective 30 years ago, when the Movement was first formed. The only salvation for the workers was the courageous advocacy of the socialistic doctrine. It was no use depending on the politicians – some of them had no more sense than a wet hen.

**Mr Storey’s Opposition**

Mr John Storey, MLA, opposed the motion, and was subjected to continued interruption from a section of the Conference and the public at the back of the hall. At times it was impossible to hear what was being said. He said that it was all very well for Mr Rae to complain that the Labor Party had not given effect to the socialistic doctrine; but it had to be remembered that Mr Rae was one of the first Labor members elected to the State Parliament and one of the first to be booted out again. (Uproar, and cries of “He won’t be the last.”) Mr Rae had denounced militarism in order to gain the applause of the anti-militarists, but why not be straight on the matter? When he contested the last Senate elections he allowed it to go forth that he had sons at the war. “I am sick and tired of the hypocrisy of men”, said Mr Storey, “who pose as the only honest champions of the people, yet secretly trim for any wind that might prove advantageous to them. It was all very well for people to come along and tell them what was happening in other parts of the world as a reason for stimulating them into further action. As a matter of fact, no country was as far advanced as Australia was at the present time.”

**“You Were Premier Once”**

Mr Storey went on to say that it had been charged that they had not done all they might have done as representatives in the Parliament of the workers – (cries of “That’s true”) – but those loudest in their accusations seemed to forget that he had never had an opportunity as an administrator. (Uproar.)

A Voice: “You were Premier once”. (Laughter.)

Mr Storey: “Yes, for about five minutes”.

The Conference by this time was in a state of uproar, interjections being fired at Mr Storey from all parts of the hall. All appeals by the President seemed to be in vain, though he several times threatened to close the Conference unless order was restored.

Mr Storey said they should adhere to the present objective. It would be utterly futile for the next quarter of a century to do anything of value to relieve the position as it presented itself today in regard to the capitalist class – (cries of “God help us” and groans and hoots). Mr Rae
and others talked about the overthrow of the capitalist system, but up to date they had not shown him how it was to be done.

**Empty Platitudes of No Use**

In answer to an interjection Mr Storey said: “My political life is an open book. I am only conservative in my desire to preserve the Labor Movement, which has stood the test for 25 years. We can work out our own destiny in this country if we realise the obligation that is upon us by a gradual process of evolution. Mere empty platitudes can be talked by anyone. Let them show me how the social system can be improved right away and I will join in the fight heartily.” (Cheers.)

Mr Toombs was on his feet in an instant shouting, “I'll take you up, Mr Storey”. (Uproar and cries of “Sit down.”)

Mr Storey, answering Mr Toombs, stated that he (Mr Toombs) had sat in Parliament for three years, and did not make any effort to push forward the view he pretended to have so much at heart at the present time. “Let me tell this gathering”, continued Mr. Storey, “that whenever Holman wanted a speaker to make a speech of a particular brand he selected Toombs to do the job. When the conscription issue was first raised Mr Toombs was loud-mouthed in professing his loyalty and in suggesting that eligible Parliamentarians should put their names in a hat to see who should enlist. “He said, ‘By God, I'll be the first to enlist’. Friends, he has been enlisting ever since”. (Uproar and applause.)

Concluding his speech Mr Storey appealed to Conference to reject the motion, and stick to the old objective. They should not be misled by platitudes, but should exercise that commonsense and judgment that would help them to regain political power, when they could sympathetically, honestly and democratically administer affairs in the interests of the workers. (Applause.)

**Uproar Increases**

Mr Davies, MLA, in a short speech supported the motion.

Mr Blakeley, MHR, met with an exceedingly stormy reception as he attacked those who did not believe in political action. “Every man and woman who attempts to fasten some cranky scheme upon the Movement is against political action”, said Mr Blakeley. Hoots, groans, hisses and counter applause prevented his being heard for some time. Eventually he was able to continue his speech. He said that the politicians were charged with treachery - a term that had been bandied from side to side during the Conference. On what side were the honest people? The extremists declared for a policy of revolution against political action, yet they were present at a Labor Conference. The very fact that they were present showed that they were treacherous to their own principles. (Uproar.)
You don’t want to put people into Parliament,” added Mr Blakeley, “you want to put them out, and you are on the right track by moving resolutions such as these”. (Uproar.)

**A New Movement Is Coming In**

In replying, the mover of the motion, (Mr Willis) stated that the carrying of the motion would pave the way for collective ownership with the people controlling the industries in which they worked. “You have either to justify yourselves”, said Mr Willis, “or else the new movement is coming in to take your place, whether you like it or not. You cannot crush the aspirations of the working classes.” Mr Willis was cheered loudly as he resumed his seat.

Amidst great excitement the vote was taken, and the motion moved by Mr Willis was defeated by 127 to 112. With the defeat of this resolution (the Lithgow motion now having been withdrawn), the whole of the suggested alterations to the objective went overboard, including the one from the Cessnock Electoral Council that the OBU preamble be the objective of the Party. When the vote was announced there was a great outburst of cheering from the moderates, and the singing of “The Red Flag” by the extremists. Finally, disorder brought the session to a close.

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**Day 3, Tuesday, 10 June 1919**

**NSW Labor Conference. A new Fighting Platform. Compulsory clauses of Defence Act. Motion for repeal carried by overwhelming majority.**

When Conference assembled on Tuesday evening (June 10) it was anticipated that some progress would be made. It soon became apparent, however, that serious business was out of the question. Formal matters took up the time of the Conference until about half-past nine, when pandemonium broke lose and for a time it looked as if there would be serious trouble. However, oil was poured on the troubled waters and the anger of delegates subsided.

Conference extended a welcome to Mr JP Teefey (General President Clerks’ Association of Australia) and Mr Doyle (Secretary, Ipswich Branch of the same organisation) who were returning to Queensland from a conference in Melbourne. Mr Teefey addressed Conference for a few minutes, and his reference to our “democratic State of Queensland” evoked cheers from the delegates. Welcomes were also extended to Mr T Walsh (General Secretary, Seamen’s Union) and Mrs Walsh, Mr C Von Hagen, and Mr Monty Miller.
Monty Miller was wildly cheered as he delivered a moving speech in which he spoke of the Labor Movement in Australia receiving its birth in the blood and carnage of the Eureka Stockade over half a century ago. He was sorry to say, however, that although the eight-hour day was granted sixty years ago, not one hour had been chopped off it since. He said that whatever their differences might be, he felt sure that they were united in attaining the one common ideal, the complete and full emancipation of the working classes from the capitalistic system.

**Delegates Threaten To Leave**

A letter was read from Mr C Thompson (General Secretary of the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association) objecting to the nomination of a delegate as an Executive officer of the Movement on the grounds of being a Labor “rat”. Immediately the letter was read there was uproar, which increased as Mr Thompson addressed the Conference on the subject.

Mr Willis rose and in an angry voice protested against the time of the Conference being wasted on a squabble between two unions. It was a shame to so waste the time of Conference and should be stopped.

Uproar was manifested in various parts of the Conference hall, particularly in the back, where the public were congregated. Delegates were on their feet threatening each other and an exchange of blows seemed inevitable.

Mr Rae appealed to Conference to calm itself. He considered they were not in a fit state to deal with the question and suggested that a committee should be appointed to inquire into the allegation and report back to Conference.

Mr Rosa: “The time is being shockingly wasted, Mr President”.

Mr Thompson was still on his feet, and was heard to remark that the delegate he had accused was a Labor “rat”.

Mr Willis: “That is not true. (Uproar.) I am not going to stand here and allow you to condemn this man by force of numbers”. Raising his voice he continued: “It has now come to the point when this kind of business has to stop. If it doesn’t ...”. The rest of his remarks were drowned in the uproar. A large section of the delegates were on their feet, gathering up coats, hats, and papers. There were cries of “One out, all out”, and a move was made to leave the hall. But better counsel prevailed, and after a little time calm was restored. The President made reference to the manner in which delegates in the back of the hall had kept order, and a few sarcastic rejoinders were hurled back in reply. Eventually the matter was smoothed over by deciding to refer the matter to a committee on which both sections would have representation.

The rest of the evening was devoted to a demonstration of the working of the proportional representation system by Mr AG Huie.
Day 4, Wednesday, 11 June 1919

New Fighting Platform

On Wednesday evening, June 11, as soon as formal business was out of the way, the report of the Platform Condensation Committee, endorsed by the Executive, was brought up by Mr J Farrell, who moved its adoption. The report recommended the following:

Constitutional Reform

1. (a) Abolition of the Legislative Council and the substitution therefor (stet) of the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall.
   (b) Abolition of the office of State Governor.
   (c) Full citizen rights for women.
2. The right to work and equitable industrial laws, including an adequate living wage for all.
3. Adequate provision for returned soldiers and dependents.
4. Reduction of cost of commodities and of rent.
5. Effective land settlement and re reafforestation.
6. Transference of all banking to Commonwealth ownership.
7. Establishment of the iron and steel industry by State or Commonwealth Governments.
8. Mining Law Reform.
9. Complete secular educational facilities on a democratic basis free to all.
11. Law Reform.

Senator Grant said he supported the proposal that the State platform should be confined to a dozen planks. The present platform was far too unwieldy. Anyhow elections nowadays were very often fought on one or two planks, sometimes on no planks at all.

Mr JH Catts suggested that the principle be affirmed and the planks then debated one by one. This suggestion was carried.

The proposals contained in Plank No.1 were agreed to after a brief discussion, no opposition being offered.

The Right to Work

Mr Rosa moved the adoption of Plank No.2. He wanted to see society reorganised on a more equitable basis. He would like to see the means of
production and distribution controlled by the workers through organisations or guilds. He realised, however, that that could not be accomplished at once. There should have been laws long ago giving men the right to work at standard wages. Some time ago such a measure was introduced into the House of Commons by Ramsay Macdonald. If a measure of that kind could be introduced into the English Parliament and even secure votes from the opponents of Labor it was time that we in Australia did something along the same lines until society was organised on a cooperative basis. It should be a fundamental law that no man should be denied work. Unemployment was the workers’ one great fear.

Mr W Mahoney: “I’m in favor of it.”

Mr Rosa: “Well if you are, the lamentable thing is that you haven’t made a move to put it into operation”. (Laughter.)

Mr Stuart-Robertson said he didn’t think anybody could reasonably oppose the measure. Still, he wanted to know what affect the adoption of the planks would have upon the existing Platform of the Party. Would it go by the board? There were many vital things in the existing platform which were not in the new platform.

Senator Grant replied that the main reason why the new planks were drawn up was to have a shorter platform. He hoped that the old platform would go and that the new one would take its place.

What is a “Living” Wage?

Mr Barry took exception to the word “living”. It was wrong of Labor to speak of a “living” wage. The Nationalist Government was prepared to give them a “living” wage. As the plank read it seemed that they would be content with a wage sufficient to live upon.

Mr A Rae moved as an amendment the striking out of the words “including an adequate living wage for all” and the substitution of the words “by the total abolition of the wage system”. He wanted the question tested even though Socialism, according to Mr Storey, might, be 25 years away.

Mr Lazzarini said that while the ultimate emancipation of the workers was by the abolition of the wage system, he favored getting as much as they could under the present system while waiting for the other to come along. They had to adopt a plank that would benefit the present generation.

Mr J Storey said he did not think that Mr Rae’s amendment would relieve the immediate future. In the meantime what were they going to do for the men and women who would be walking the streets within the next year or two? He, too, agreed with the abolition of the wage system if it could be carried out immediately. But because he knew it was impossible, what was the use wasting time talking about it? There must be some modified proposal to be carried into practical effect ready for
use. Only the other evening the Conference had turned down the motion aiming at an alteration of the objective which included the abolition of the wage system. What was the use, then, in wasting further time about it? He was opposed to the amendment.

A Fair Compromise

Mr Willis at this stage suggested that the difficulty might be met by Mr Rae altering his amendment to read “ensuring an adequate standard of living for all”. Mr Rae did not accept the suggestion, but Mr Rosa said he would accept it as part of the original motion.

Senator Gardiner objected to Mr Rae putting forward an extreme principle on the ground that “there was a little limelight in it”. He thought Mr Willis’s suggestion a fair compromise.

Mr Hackett supported Mr Rae’s amendment. It was far better for the Labor Movement to die an honorable death than be carried on in disgrace and correction. They should abolish the system under which workers had to grovel for jobs. It was a scandalous thing that in a country capable of sustaining 100,000,000 people, but which held only 5,000,000, people were hungry and starving that very night. “While we are talking here little children are on the streets selling newspapers and tomorrow morning they will be up before daybreak. The fathers and mothers who bring children into this world have no right to say that because they slaved when they were young their offspring should be made to do the same. They have to be protected, and you can only do that by seeing that they get the full product of their labor.”

Mr Rae’s amendment was defeated by a large majority, and the plank as altered by Mr Willis’s amendment was adopted in this form: “The right to work, and equitable industrial laws ensuring an adequate standard of living for all”.

Disabled Soldiers and Workers

After a lively few minutes’ debate on the question of allowing a couple of alternate delegates to take their seats, discussion was resumed on Plank No.3. This was moved by Mr W Martin (Glebe), who said that everybody must be shocked at the treatment handed out to the returned soldiers. It was a degradation that today the mothers and widows of soldiers were receiving a mere pittance, while military upstarts treated them as though they were the worst paupers in the country. He protested against imported soldiery coming to this country whose one ambition was to secure food for cannons.

Mr A Rae moved as an amendment the omission of the word “returned” and to substitute “adequate provision for disabled soldiers, industrial and military and their dependents”. He considered there
should be provision for those wounded in the industrial armies as well as those in the military armies. The wrecks in the industrial army worked for a frugal wage without getting any limelight, still they were entitled to consideration just the same.

Corporal Murphy opposed the motion, while Mr Nulty stated that when the soldiers went away to fight, definite promises were made to them, and they should make a clear-cut statement that they were prepared to carry out those promises.

**Industrial Wrecks Must Be Considered**

Mr Brookfield said he favored the amendment. The industrial wrecks deserved as much consideration as the wounded from the battlefield. The industrial battle raged all the time, but there was no limelight attached to it. He considered the original clause was only window-dressing for the purposes of pandering to the sentiments of the people. They had to be careful not to put all their goods in the shop window, and have none left inside the shop. He dwelt on the number of persons wrecked in the mining districts, especially at Broken Hill, and said that the Labor Movement could not afford to overlook this aspect of the question.

Mr John Storey, MLA, said he supported the amendment. (Applause.) The provisions made for returned soldiers and their dependents were always recognised as inadequate, especially when contrasted with the elaborate promises that were made when the men went away. While adequate provision should be made for them, they had to remember that attention should be paid to those disabled on the industrial field. It was true that they had a Workmen’s Compensation Act, but it was only partially effective.

Mr Martin (mover of the motion) said he would accept the amendment as part of the motion.

**Mr Willis on War Loans**

Mr Willis moved as an addition: “And that until such provision is made no interest shall be paid on the War Loan to any person owning over £100 in the loan”. He was against a penny interest being paid to any person who held more than £100 in the War Loan. It was a monstrous thing for men to be called upon to make sacrifices of their lives when others only loaned their money at 5 per cent. They should say to the other side: “Until you fulfil your obligations to those who fought to protect your property you shall not be allowed to collect a single penny interest on your blood money”. The Labor Party had to see that it did not accept the liability incurred as a result of the war. They had no right to accept those liabilities.
The President ruled Mr Willis’s amendment out of order on the ground that it was Commonwealth business. Mr Willis challenged his ruling, but lost when a division was taken. The motion was then carried on the voices.

Day 5, Thursday, 12 June 1919

Leasehold Tenure Adhered To

Consideration of the Party platform was continued on Thursday evening, June 12. Mr A Buckley moved: “Plank No.4: Reduction of the cost of commodities and of rent”, which after a short discussion was carried on the voices.

Plank No.1 moved by Mr Loughlin, MLA, – “Effective land settlement and reafforestation” – came in for some discussion. Alderman Farrell (Darlinghurst) said that the people did not appreciate the asset they had in timber. At the present time oregon was being imported, while ironbark, the best timber that could be obtained, was being grown locally. He suggested that an embargo should be placed on timber.

Mr Arthur Rae moved as an amendment that the principle of leasehold tenure be incorporated in the plank. Mr Storey, MLA, asked that Conference should carry the plank as submitted by the platform committee. If that were done and Labor was elected to power next year, Conference could depend on the plank being rigidly adhered to.

For some time discussion centred around the possibility of amending the platform under discussion and its relation to other platforms. It was explained by the Chairman and then by Miss Matthews that the platform before the Conference, if adopted, would become the definite fighting platform of the Labor Party, and all other platforms would go overboard. An attempt was made to introduce a short concise platform; one that could be easily intelligible. It could now be amended by Conference. Many speakers were of the opinion that there were many items in the old platform which they could not drop overboard and which were not included in the new platform.

The question of leasehold v. freehold was discussed but eventually the motion was carried on the voices in the following form: “Effective land settlement and reafforestation on the leasehold tenure”.

The discussion on the Party platform was adjourned till the following evening.
**Peter Simonoff’s Case**

Mr Hutton (Northern Miners) moved “That this Conference expresses its indignation at the action of the Federal Government in imprisoning Peter Simonoff (the Russian Consul in Australia), and requests that if he is not immediately released he be treated as a political prisoner”. It was pointed out that Simonoff, notwithstanding his official standing, was being treated as an ordinary prisoner, and had been removed to Maitland Jail. Fears were expressed that an attempt would be made to deport Simonoff from Australia unless some effective protest was made. The motion was carried on the voices.

**Another Trial for IWW Men Demanded**

Another motion, moved by Mr J Cullinan, demanded that a further inquiry be made into the case of the 12 imprisoned IWW men. This motion was also carried on the voices.

**Day 6, Friday, 13 June 1919**

**Trial Demanded For Interned Russians**

After the completion of formal business last Friday evening, June 13, Captain Toombs moved the following motion, which was carried without discussion — “That this Conference views with alarm the deaths of seamen so near to port and safety, and is of the opinion that Section 231 of the Australian Navigation Act of 1912 should be amended to provide for compulsory wireless installation in all Australian ships, and that the Act so amended be given effect to at once by proclamation as provided, so that the Australian seamen shall receive the protection and benefits conferred by the Act, and given to them by the Parliament of their country”.

Another motion was moved asking the Federal Government to give the Russians interned in Darlinghurst Detention Barracks for deportation, a trial in open court. Mr Rosa, supporting this motion, held that it was not only wrong to deport men without a trial, but very wrong to deport them at all. Australia should take a leaf out of England’s book in her best days, and make this free country an asylum for oppressed people. Regarding the Russian people there was not even the guarantee that they were being sent to a place of safety. They might be landed in some part of Russia where reactionaries were in control, and be executed or otherwise murdered as soon as they landed.
**Sentences on Soldiers**

Mr W Gibbs (Returned Soldiers) moved -"That in view of the cessation of hostilities, and the near approach of peace, the Commonwealth Government should immediately review all sentences passed by court martial on Australian soldiers serving in the AIF, and that all soldiers sentenced for disciplinary offences should be immediately released; further, that the Interstate Conference should be requested to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Federal Government to have the foregoing carried into effect”.

Mr Rosa drew attention to the fact that Australian soldiers were being recruited in England to fight in Russia. He characterized that as a scandalous piece of business and thought that a specific motion of protest should be carried by Conference. The President (Mr Lambert) pointed out that at the opening of the Conference a general motion was carried regarding Russia, which he thought covered the whole position.

Discussion of the Party’s Fighting Platform was then continued.

**Federal Control of Banking**

Mr JH Catts moved Plank No.6 - “Transference of all banking to Commonwealth ownership”. Mr Catts pointed out that the plank had been wrongly worded, it being impossible to deal with private banking within the State, as that was already governed by the Commonwealth Constitution, while the State Government banking business could only be transferred to the Commonwealth by consent. Under the circumstances he moved the plank in the following amended form - “Transfer of all State Savings Bank business to the Commonwealth upon an equitable arrangement guaranteeing reasonable credits to the States for public purposes”. The object of the plank, it was explained, was to abolish the private banking system.

Mr Catts stated that if the State Parliament was composed entirely of Labor men, and it desired to transfer private banking to the Commonwealth, it would not be able to do so, since it had not the power. The only banks within the power of the State Government were the Savings Banks. He deprecated the wasteful system of two sets of Savings Banks in almost every town and village, competing against each other for business - the cost of which had to be borne by the taxpayers. One bank was enough for all, and all useless overlapping should be done away with. While he would like to see all private banks abolished he recognized that it could not be done. Under the circumstances they should aim at getting as much as possible through the State.
Rural Credits

Mr Nulty (Murrumbidgee) suggested that Conference should appoint a committee of three to deal with the matter and report back to Conference. Delegates, he said, did not know too much about banking, which was a matter for experts. He did not think the original motion would cover the matter fully. People on leasehold land should be assured that they would get financial aid. Under the leasehold system, although a man might put a thousand pounds worth of improvement on his land he was unable to get an advance through the banks, whereas if the land was freehold he would be able to get anything up to, perhaps, 75 per cent of the value advanced for further improvements. That was very hard on the people.

Mr John Storey, MLA, said it was impossible to outline what would be done when affirming a principle. While they could not interfere with the private banks, they could more effectively use the State banks by establishing rural credits throughout the State to help the workers. They wanted to be able to help settlers whether their land was freehold or leasehold. He had, on behalf of the Party, already outlined what they intended to do under this heading.

Mr C Johnson, MLA, thought they should have something definite in the platform. He moved to include the words “for rural credits” after the word “State”, in order to assist agriculturists and others engaged in rural pursuits whose lands were held on the leasehold principle. The suggestion was accepted by Mr Catts, as also was a suggestion to include the words “housing loans”. The motion then read as follows – “Transference of all Savings Bank business to the Commonwealth upon an equitable arrangement, and guaranteeing a reasonable credit to the State for rural credits, housing loans, and for all other purposes”. The motion was carried on the voices.

Iron and Steel Industry

Alderman R Bramston moved Plank No.7 – “Establishment of the iron and steel industry by State or Commonwealth”. He instanced the fact that although the Commonwealth paid out its bonus for Australian production, it did not keep the price of Australian iron and steel down to a fair figure – on the other hand, the price was raised to that of the imported article. He considered there was a big opening for a State-owned steel and iron industry. As a matter of expediency the people should adopt nationalisation and later on talk about cooperation.

Mr C Pattinson (Northern Miners) moved that the clause be deleted and the following substituted: “Reduction of hours of labor to forty per week for outside workers, and thirty hours per week for mine workers”.
He claimed that the question of hours was of far more importance to workers than the establishment of steel and iron works.

Mr Storey, MLA: “If we hadn’t any works, we wouldn’t be able to govern hours for the workers at all”.

The President ruled Mr Pattinson’s motion out of order, but gave him an assurance that the question of hours for mine workers would be discussed under Plank 5, while the forty-hour week could be discussed under a recommittal of Plank 2.

Senator Gardiner’s “Fighting” Proposal

Senator Gardiner also moved for the deletion of the motion and the substitution of the following: “The total prohibition of the manufacture, importation, and sale of all alcoholic or intoxicating liquors”. (Laughter and cries of “Oh”) He said he had no wish to underestimate-the importance of the plank which he wished to see deleted, but he considered they wanted something that would make the Labor Party the target of vested interests from one end of the Commonwealth to the other. A fighting party should have a fighting platform, and he considered that if they adopted his motion they would have plenty of fight.

The President ruled Senator Gardiner’s proposal out of order. Another delegate then moved an amendment having for its purpose the giving to the workers control of the iron and steel industry.

“Nationalisation a Farce”

Mr Willis supported the amendment, and said that nationalisation was a farce. To simply nationalise an industry was playing the fool with the people, and experience had shown that it did not advance the workers one bit. He wanted to see employees in particular industries controlling those industries.

Mr Storey, MLA, opposed the amendment. If nationalisation had been a failure in the past it was due to unsympathetic administration. He referred to the railways, and said that if Labor was elected at the general elections it was proposed to appoint a Railway Commissioner elected by the workers in the industry (applause), and the principle would be applied to every other large industry in the State. Notwithstanding the alleged evils of nationalisation, railway employees displayed no desire to leave the service. (Cries of “They’re leaving every day”.) Parliamentarians were kept busy every day getting men into the Government service and restoring others who had left.
Conference Should Be Practical

Mr Storey asked Conference to be practical in its suggestions, and do things which were within the realms of possibility. He was amazed at suggestions that the workers should control and manage industries while the State should be asked to find the money to finance them. If, in the past nationalisation had not been favored, it was because a majority of the people did not desire it. Whenever 51 out of every 100 electors wished for nationalisation they would find expression on the statute books of the country. He was sorry to say that a former Conference had agreed to the Broken Hill Company establishing a steel and iron industry at Newcastle, which, while it didn’t return much money to the Treasury, returned plenty to shareholders, many of whom resided in other parts of the world. The amendment was childish and impracticable.

Mr Storey was subjected to considerable interruption during the course of his speech.

Mr Roels, in a heated speech, accused Mr Storey of misleading the workers. (Up roar). It was all very well to speak of sympathetic administration, but during the lifetime of the McGowen Government there was a strike at the gas works and the Government advertised for “scab” workers to fill the place of strikers. (Up roar).

Mr Storey: “That is not true”.

Mr Roels went on to make personal references to Mr Storey, at which Mr Storey appealed to the President for protection from the “insulting” references of the speaker, who was then heard to say, “You are not worthy of discussion”.

Mr Storey replied: “I will give you an opportunity of proving that, if you are not careful”. There was considerable uproar in the back of the hall, and many personal questions were hurled at Mr Storey.

After further debate the motion, as originally moved, was carried on the voices.

Day 7, Saturday, 14 June 1919

The “Labor News”

Very little business was done at the Labor Conference last Saturday (June 14), either at the afternoon or the evening session. There was open hostility between the two sections which interfered with the progress of business to no little extent. Both sessions ended in something approaching wild disorder – the afternoon session being closed down in uproar, while the close of the evening session saw blows exchanged between a couple of delegates.
The President (Mr WH Lambert) was absent through illness, and his place was taken by Mr AC Willis (Vice-President), Mr AE O’Brien being voted to the vice-chair. Mr Willis, in opening the proceedings, referred to the untimely death of Mr LJ O’Hara, MLA. Everybody present, he said, regretted the death of Mr O’Hara, one of the most sincere workers in the ranks of the Labor Movement. After other delegates had referred to the popularity of Mr O’Hara a resolution of sympathy was carried. Conference then adjourned for five minutes as a mark of respect.

Mr Dan Clyne secured the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to discuss a proposal for raising funds for the Labor News. The proposal was: “That Branch membership in the ALP be increased, in the case of males from 2/- to 4/-, and females, from 1/- to 2/- per annum. The extra money to be credited to the Labor News account, and each member to receive the official organ posted to his or her home address for one quarter, with the option of continuing the subscription for a longer period at the usual rate.”

The proposal, if adopted, he said, would tremendously accelerate the success of the Labor News – in fact, it was hoped that it would permanently establish it beyond question, and so carry Labor’s message to every nook and corner of the State. It was desirous that, as the State and Federal elections were approaching, immediate consideration should be given to the proposal. During the last twelve months activities had been considerably hampered owing to lack of funds. The Executive wanted to place the paper on a footing whereby it could finance itself. If the League members were prepared to put their money into the scheme, the circulation would increase.

Opposition to Proposal

One delegate opposed the scheme on the ground that it was hard enough to get members to join leagues at the present low rate, without asking them to pay an extra couple of shillings. If they increased the league membership rates they would drive prospective members away. Other delegates also opposed any increase of the branch membership fees.

Miss Matthews said it was necessary to get money to fight the elections. The Labor News also required money. If it was secured, League members would get back the money invested a hundredfold. Mr P Adler asked delegates if they seriously thought that advertisers would fall over themselves to advertise in a paper that used such a proposition to secure finances as this. If they did, then they had a great deal more faith than he had. The Labor News could not be put on a sound basis in the way that was advocated. If they wanted to make the paper a success, let them organise the Movement properly and then something might be done.

Mr J Howie caused some excitement by asking some questions about the management of the paper.

The motion was defeated by a large majority.
Seamen Congratulated

Mr Brookfield secured the suspension of the Standing Orders to move the following notion: “That Conference congratulate the seamen of Australia on the militant stand they had taken to improve conditions of toil and wages, and urged the Labor Movement to give the seamen their wholehearted support”. The motion was carried.

Mr Rosa moved the suspension of the Standing Orders to discuss the report of the Labor News. He wanted to have some daylight thrown on the matter. While the vote was being taken, some delegates were seen to enter the hall from outside. This was the signal for hoots and yells from the extreme section of the delegates. An altercation took place between two delegates, and for a few moments things looked serious. The Chairman vainly appealed for order, but as this was impossible, he promptly adjourned the Conference till the evening.

[Labor News]

After the tea adjournment, Mr D Clyne read the report and balance-sheet of the Labor News, during which it was disclosed that there was a deficit of £975 on the operations of the journal up to date. The report stated that the paper had been published under adverse circumstances before preparations had been made to adequately launch it, while the subscriptions from Branches had not been up to expectations.

An acrimonious debate followed between delegates as to the conduct of the journal, after which a motion was carried receiving the report with the addendum that before any article appeared in the paper a majority of the management should decide the question of publication.

Mining Law Reform

Discussion on the fighting platform was then continued. Mr Brookfield, MLA, moved Plank No.2, Mining Law Reform - details of which have already been published in The Worker. He said they wanted to bring about a better and more peaceful method of working the mines. It was intended not only to nationalise the mines, but to give the workers some say in the conditions under which they had to work. He stated that at the present time the mines were worked in the interests of the capitalists rather than in the interests of the community, and often at the expense of the lives of the workers. The mines should be worked in the interests of the people, with due regard to the lives of those engaged in the industry. Piecework and contract work should be done away with – at best these wore only speeding-up devices which threw hundreds of workers on the scrapheap as industrial wrecks.
Mr D Hutton (Northern Miners) said that they should have better conditions in the mines. He said it would come as a surprise to Sydney people to learn that while the miners were mining coal for as low as 1d per cwt the people were charged 2/- per cwt for the same coal. They should make some efforts to discover who got the other 1/1. He deprecated the action of the first Labor Government in granting leases to wealthy coal capitalists on the Maitland coalfield, where the best coal was, instead of using it for State purposes. The Labor Party, in his opinion, should have had mines of its own long ago.

Mr Lynch (Railway Workers) said there should be some provision for inspection of quarries, shafts, tunnels, etc. Many men were killed owing to the absence of such inspection. They had tried to get inspectors appointed in the past, but without avail.

After Mr Brookfield gave an assurance that this would be attended to in the new plank, it was carried on the voices.

**Simpler Form of Law**

Mr C Johnston, MLA, moved Plank No.11 – Law Reform – details of which have already been published. He instanced the methods of law at the present time which very often precluded poor people from getting that justice to which they were entitled.

Mr A Rutherford (Saddlers) moved an amendment that in order that the people should have confidence in judges, they should be elected by the people, and subject to the recall. He instanced what had been done in Russia by the Soviet Government, with the result that the workers got cleaner justice. He claimed that under the present system it was almost impossible for radicals to get a fair deal owing to the natural bias of judges, and the fact that jurymen were appointed only on property qualifications.

The amendment was defeated, and the original plank carried on the voices.

In place of Plank 9 (Education), Miss Matthews moved the introduction of the plank in the old platform - Complete educational facilities: (a) Free education – secondary, technical, and university; (b) free school materials. The motion was agreed to without discussion.

Mr S Hickey moved Plank No.10 - Nationalisation of Health. He said they intended to put a stop to the present system of charity cadging on the streets in order to raise money for the hospitals, and see that they were financed by taxation. It was also intended that the hospitals would be open to all. There would also be provision for a taxing authority in order to protect patients from exploiting physicians and surgeons.

The Conference adjourned at 10 o’clock till Monday evening.
Day 8, Monday, 16 June 1919

Compulsory Clauses of Defence Act

Owing to some misunderstanding as to the place of meeting, it was well on towards eight o’clock when the Labor Conference resumed on Monday evening.

Mr Ivey (Broken Hill) secured the suspension of the Standing Orders, and moved: “That all planks of the old platform which are not included and are not inconsistent with the new platform be made binding upon members of Parliament”. Senator Gardiner opposed, maintaining that as Conference had ruled that the platform should be composed of 13 planks the motion was improper. His objection was overruled by the Chairman (Mr AC Willis), whereupon Senator Gardiner dissented. On a vote, the Chairman’s ruling was upheld by 78 votes to 70. Mr Ivey’s motion was then agreed to on the voices.

Mr Brookfield secured the suspension of the Standing Orders, and moved the following motion: “That it be an instruction to the delegates to the Interstate Conference to fight and work for the repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act”. There was considerable cheering when Mr Brookfield announced his motion. Senator Grant sought to move an amendment that delegates to the Interstate Conference be given a free hand in the matter, but it was resented by the Conference and lapsed.

Mr AC Rutherford seconded the resolution and said that a fundamental principle was involved. If they were democrats then they could have no objection to a motion that aimed at cutting out a cancer of militarism. The late war was supposed to be the war to end war – the jingoes said so anyhow. It was for Labor to keep the jingoes up to their war-time expressions by seeing to it that there was nothing that would make for war.

Australia in Peril

Senator Gardiner, in a vigorous speech, opposed the motion. He said there were two sides to the question of Australian defence. It was as well that they recognised that Australia’s existence as a white nation was threatened. The South Pacific today was the goal of Japanese ambitions and they could not shut their eyes to that fact. The Japanese press was openly advocating the extension of Japanese interests in the Pacific. If they wished to keep Australia free of the colored menace they would have to fight for it, and how could they do that if they did not have an adequate defence force? Senator Gardiner was subjected to much interruption, interspersed with hoots, groans, etc. The Chairman prevailed upon the public in the gallery to keep order.
Senator Gardiner went on to say that they might organise on their grand scheme of international brotherhood, but that did not get away from the fact that colored labor was prepared to work for a shilling a day. When the censorship was lifted they would learn something regarding Britain’s ally in the East that would surprise them. He concluded by stating that if he was selected as a delegate to the Interstate Conference he would not act upon the instruction embodied in the motion, but would interpret the view of the Labor Movement for himself upon the matter.

**NSW Must Not Lag Behind**

Mr Denford, in support of the motion, said that the Labor Conferences of Victoria, South Australia and Queensland had instructed their Interstate delegates to work for the repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act, and it was up to the Labor Movement of New South Wales, which recorded such a magnificent vote against conscription, to show that they did not lag behind the other States in the campaign against militarism. He deprecated the idea that Japan had her eyes on Australia, and said that all the talk of a colored invasion was only a bogey used by the capitalists to keep the workers of Australia in fear. With a revolution sweeping the world, there was no fear of any outside nation interfering in Australia. When the capitalists and the Governments made this country worth fighting for the people would fight for it - but not before. (Applause).

Mr JH Catts, MHR, said that Australia had to be defended in some way. (Groans and hoots.) Would anybody say that if we had no defence, Australia would be safe?

A voice in the gallery. “A mad Chow might come along”. (Laughter.) Mr Catts went on to say that some kind of defence was absolutely necessary, He asked those opposed to the present Defence Act what kind of defence they wanted. He for one did not wish to see Australia dependent on England, nor did he want to see a professional soldiery springing up in the land. While there was much in the administration of the present Defence Act that was irritating, that was no reason why the whole scheme should go overboard. Every Socialist country in the world believed in a citizen defence force as against a professional soldiery. It was idiotic to say that Australia did not require a defence force.

**Turning Men into Human Butchers**

Mr Brookfield, replying to the motion, instanced the fact that none of the speakers opposed to the motion had anything to say about the damning influence of militarism on the boys of Australia. He objected to the lads’ minds being warped by military thugs. If it was a question of choosing between conscripting men or boys he would say conscript men every
time. (Cheers.) It had been suggested that without the compulsory clauses in the Defence Act somebody might run away with Australia. Well, prior to the war there was no conscription in England and nobody tried to run away with that country. To him it was a damnable thing to think that Labor men were prepared to stand for compulsory military service. (Cheers.) He was opposed to a system that turned men into human butchers. The people of Australia had already twice defeated conscription, consequently how much longer were they going to stand for the compulsory clauses in the Defence Act? He traced how Prussian militarism grew from the simple citizen force that was instituted in Germany over a hundred years ago. Did they want such a damnable cancer to take root in Australia? It should be their aim to root out militarism once and for all time. (Great cheering.)

The motion was carried, amidst great enthusiasm, by 110 votes to 18.

The resumption of the debate on the fighting platform was then entered upon. Mr R Bramston moved Plank 12 – system of light railways for isolated districts. The motion was carried on the voices without discussion.

Mr D Clyne moved the report of the Redistribution Committee, appointed by the Executive some time ago – details of which appear elsewhere in this issue. After a lengthy debate the report was adopted, with an addendum by Mr Rosa that whatever system of voting and counting is adopted by Parliament, that particular system be adopted in deciding the selection of candidates for the Labor Party.

Conference then adjourned till the following night (Tuesday).

Election of New Executive. Win for Moderate Section

The election for the 1919-20 New South Wales Labor Executive resulted in a complete victory for the Moderate section of the Annual Conference – every position being captured by a “moderate delegate”. The result of the voting was as follows:

President: Ald WH Lambert, 143 (re-elected), A Rae, 92.
Vice-President (2): WT Burgess, 132; RD Bramston, 128 (elected1); AC Willis, 114; SA Rosa 96.
Secretary: PC Evans (elected unopposed).
Executive (30): Miss EM O’Sullivan, 141; G. Sutherland, 141; DF Dwyer, 140; J Farrell, 138; J Andrews, 137; Miss Cashman, 136; V Molesworth, 136; T Arthur, 134; W Carey, 134; CH Murphy, 133; AE O’Brien, 133; Mrs M Henson, 132; W O’Connor, 132; JF Higgins, 130; Mrs EM Seery, 130; Mrs M Lalor, 129; DF Ryan, 128; J White, 127; TS Bartle, 126; C Last, 125; N McPhee, 125; W Brotheron, 124; Mrs B Singleton, 124; TJ Tyrrell, 124; HJ Mitchell, 123; TJ Swiney, 123; TJ Shiels, 122; AB Berry, 122; BW Shields, 122; W Martin, 118.

Members of Interstate Executive (2): J Farrell, 132, G Sutherland, 123 (elected). AC Willis, 114; A Rutherford, 95.

Delegates to Interstate Conference (4). J Storey, MLA, 141; J. Farrell, 135; Senator Gardiner, 131; V Molesworth, 128; G Sutherland, 126; Mrs EM Seery, 125; (elected). The defeated candidates were Messrs AC Willis, 112; JM Power, 108; A Rae, 103; A Rutherford, 96; JS Garden, 95; and SA Rosa, 93.

The returning officer’s report was signed by the following scrutineers, as testifying to the correctness of the ballot. Senator Grant and Mr AE Roberts (for the Moderates). Messrs C McMahon and J Devlin (for the Extremists).

Day 9, Tuesday, 17 June 1919

An Abrupt Ending. NSW Labor Conference.

Militants Leave Conference Hall

There was a dramatic development in connection with the proceedings of the NSW Annual Labor Conference on Tuesday night last.

When Conference assembled at the Protestant Hall, Sydney, Mr R Bramston, one of the newly-elected Vice-Presidents, took the chair in the absence of the President (Mr WH Lambert), and proceeded to declare the Conference open for business. There were angry protests from a section of the delegates, it being contended that as the returning officers’ announcement of the new Executive had not been officially made to Conference, Mr Willis should be permitted to act as chairman as he had been doing in Mr Lambert’s absence. Mr Bramston, however, refused to submit. Then disorder broke loose, and for some time there were hoots and groans, mingled with cheers and shouts.

Protests were shouted from all parts of the hall, and the climax was reached when the militants, gathering up their coats hats, and papers, left the hall in a body. The greatest excitement prevailed at the time.

Conference Out of Control

As they were leaving, Mr Catts, MHR, moved that the returning officer’s report be adopted, this being carried on the voices. Mrs EM Seery then moved: “That when the Conference had dealt with the motions relating
to the platform of the Party, the Conference should adjourn, and that all remaining business he dealt with by the new Executive”. This was agreed to.

Mr O’Brien managed to get a motion passed aiming at the appointment of a board for the direction of amusement, with full power of controlling any arrangements in the best interests of the public and employees in the industry, it being carried unanimously. The Conference was now hopelessly out of control, the public in the gallery keeping up a running fire of interjections, which prevented delegates being heard. Seeing that progress was impossible, Mr JH Catts moved that the Conference conclude its sittings. This was carried by 88 votes to nil.

**Split Deprecated**

The moderates then dispersed, and journeyed to Macdonell House, where a meeting of the new Executive was held, and the newly-created position was discussed. Speeches were delivered by Messrs JH Catts, MHR, Senator Gardiner, C Johnston, MLA, AE O’Brien and others in which the hopes were expressed that, though a temporary split had occurred, the confidence of former adherents would be regained.

Interstate delegates, who were present by invitation, deprecated the split, and hoped that steps would be taken to heal the breach, in view of the early approach of the elections. Mr A Stewart, General Secretary of the Australian Executive and the ALP, thought that the matter should not be taken seriously, and advised delegates to set about consolidating the Movement in order to present a united front to the Nationalists at the two elections looming in the distance.

**Militants at the Trades Hall**

After leaving the Conference, the militants and their supporters journeyed to the Trades Hall, where the position from their point of view was discussed. Mr SA Rosa, in the course of a lengthy address, dwelt with the discontent that had evidenced itself at Conference. He stated that the tactics adopted by those in control of the Movement today savored too much of Tammanyism, and would have to be stamped out if Labor was to again become a live force in the country. He added that the militants were opposed to such tactics, and intended to fight those responsible for underground engineering and wire-pulling. It was possible to bring about a better condition of affairs, and to make the Movement more wholesome and radical, and something approaching what it was in the old days.
"A New Party"

Mr AC Willis moved the following motion, which was carried: “This Conference recommends the unions and leagues to consider the advisability of forming a party prepared to work and fight for the establishment of a state of social democracy, and that a conference be called of the unions and leagues to consider this question on a date to be fixed”.

A committee was appointed to draw up a manifesto, and to take such action as deemed necessary to bring about a congress of unions and leagues.

Despite the breach that had been created, there is reason to believe that a truce will be effected in a short time, though what may happen in the event of a Congress dealing with the matter is hard to say. There is talk of the militants instituting a propaganda campaign throughout the State in order to vindicate their action at the Conference. The next few days should decide what further action, if any, will be taken by the militants, or whether the moderates themselves will take any steps to bring about a reconciliation of the two rival factions.

Australian Labor Party

Official Manifesto by the New South Wales Central Executive

To the Members of ALP Branches and Affiliated Unions.

Your Central Executive deems it necessary to issue a word of warning against enemies within our gates whose propaganda aims at weakening the discipline, breaking the solidarity, and destroying the authority of the great Movement built after many years of patient effort by to workers of Australia.

The chairman of the Employers’ Federation recently stated that he had means of immediate knowledge of the doings and arrangements of our organisation from the inside.

Similarly it is known that the agents of the Nationalist Government, provided with ample funds, are at work sowing the seeds of dissension amongst us. The industrial and political history of some of the leading plotters against the Movement is very unsatisfactory.

Genuine Laborites should be very careful with whom they associate. Under various guises and pretexts – by means of many-sided tactics –
through a number of so-called propaganda agencies, the enemies of Labor operate.

**False Doctrines of the IWW**

The Employers’ Federation, the Nationalist Government, and the capitalist press have for some time past spared no effort to fasten upon the Australian Labor Movement every unworthy excrescence and parasite growth which has batten on Labor in foreign lands. And while the press have held up to odium and contempt these undesirable offshoots of movements oversea, some among us, out of mere bravado, and with no sense of responsibility for the welfare of the Movement, proclaim themselves Bolsheviks and IWW-ites, and thus assist our enemies to sidetrack the public mind from the true aims and objects of the Australian Labor Party.

The fact that Labor demands a fair trial for industrial and political offenders such as the IWW men and the Secretary of the Social Democratic Party, must not be confounded with the attitude of the Movement to the propaganda and methods of these bodies which are anti-ALP.

A certain definite percentage of temperamental anarchists or revolutionaries are born into the world. The freedom and opportunities of Australia have attracted some of these from Britain, Russia, and America. Unfortunately a few are natives of the soil. To these the recklessness and destructiveness of the IWW appeal as a centre of attraction. Concede what they demand today and tomorrow they would denounce it. They have no rational aim.

In a manifesto recently issued by the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party the IWW is thus described:

“There is no suitable name for this propaganda. It uses the term ‘Industrial Unionism’ as a shibboleth, and yet there is probably no one among its members who can explain exactly what he means by this term. It is a propaganda that, by reason of its detractive tendencies, might be known by the name of Nihilism, were it not that this term carries with it certain heroic associations which are wholly out of place in connection with the new school. It becomes more and more clear to everyone that it is not a doctrine, not a programme, not a movement, not even a definite tendency. It is simply a turbulent and a factious state of mind. It has no consistency of belief, and no uniformity of method. It carps and cavils and denounces, and where possible, it disrupts.”

**The “White Ant” Policy**

During the conscription campaigns the Labor Movement was the recognised force against the compulsory transportation of Australian soldiers overseas, and appealed to all shades of political thought to join in the great campaign. This was the opportunity for the IWW to get a leg in.
Disbanded under the “Unlawful Associations Act”, the IWW conceived the idea of operating its destructivism against and through the Australian Labor Party. Few in numbers, loud of voice, violently aggressive, maintaining their cohesiveness through organised factions and under several aliases, the IWW-ites set about “white anting” the Labor Movement.

The disbanded “Industrial Workers of the World” (IWW) reformed under the name of the “Workers of the World Industrial Union” (WWIU), adopting the IWW constitution. The results of their work were first seen by the adoption by the Trade Union Congress, 1918, of the IWW preamble as the objective of the One Big Union (OBU).

Acting through the OBU, anarchy and destructiveness attacked the industrial unions by propaganda designed to destroy the authority of these organisations and bring about revolt amongst the membership.

The OBU created a black list of members of Parliament and union officials who dared oppose their disruptive tactics.

The IWW, alias OBU, then set out to capture the Industrial Section of the Australian Labor Party. It soon succeeded in fastening the foreign IWW preamble upon that section, and immediately commenced operations upon the Australian Labor Party itself.

It is this organised conspiracy to disrupt and destroy the ALP which has been so decisively defeated at the Annual Conference.

How It All Happened

The IWW, alias the WWIU, alias the OBU, after initial successes became arrogant, brutal, boastful. It would quickly finalise its policy of disruption! It openly avowed through its Secretary that it would “white ant” the unions by “boring from within” and “capture” the Labor Conference. This announcement appeared in the press on January 26 and March 17.

In the statement, in March it was publicly asserted:

(1) “That a propaganda committee of 70 men would leave no stone unturned to secure the election to the Conference of men and women sympathetically inclined to the OBU (IWW) preamble.

(2) “That the OBU attack would be made in Conference on a motion to be submitted from Wollongong.”

About this time, the tactics above described being common talk in Labor circles several members of the Parliamentary Labor Parties, representatives of unions and prominent Labor Leaguites, found themselves voicing the opinion that those opposed to the destructive tendencies of the IWW, alias OBU, should consult together regarding the impending danger to the Movement.

A little investigation proved that the press statements were not idle boasts, and at the eleventh hour it was resolved to accept the challenge of the revolutionary IWW brigade.
The Conference

As indicated months before, “the attack on Conference was made on a motion from Wollongong”. This Wollongong motion, No.17 on the business paper, should be carefully examined. It provided:

1. That a state of social democracy industrially organised (not politically organised), should be the “sole issue of future elections”.
2. That all ameliorative legislation should be jettisoned.
3. That a scheme for the above, with “an explanatory preamble” should prepared by a committee. (As the mover of the motion was the President of the OBU, no doubt the IWW preamble, for which the propaganda committee of 70 had been striving, was intended as the coping stone to the scheme.)

The motion aimed at destroying the means of constitutional reform through Parliament, upon which the ALP is based. By ignoring the immediate issues which concern the public mind at successive elections it would have destroyed Labor representation in Parliament. Thus Labor would have been left howling in the wilderness on a propaganda for the Elysian fields of Mesopotamia, while the workers would have suffered in the “slough of despond” for as long as any practical mind could see into the future. But the motion was defeated. The attempt to smash the Australian Labor Party as a political entity failed.

Running an Executive Ticket

The tacticians urging the IWW preamble and methods, through their inexperience of the Australian workers, sadly blundered all along the line. The mover of the motion from Wollongong in his opening speech announced that the delegates supporting “us” had determined to “caucus” on Conference business. It was found that this included running a caucus ticket for the ALP Executive. Like begets like, with the result that delegates opposed to the IWW preamble resolved to counter the block vote of the disruptionists for the Executive, but in no case was this applied to any item on the business paper. Beaten at their own game, the wreckers make night and day hideous with their yells of rage and disappointment.

From the first “test” in Conference the IWW protagonists sustained successive defeats, which, by the time the election of the new Executive took place, resulted in their attempt to gain the Presidency being defeated by 143 votes to 92; and of 70 positions to be filled, not one of their “ticket” succeeded.

After ten days’ sittings of the Conference, through the influenza epidemic playing havoc with the life and health of delegates, it was resolved that several urgent matters should be dealt with, unfinished business referred to the new Executive for attention, and that the
Conference should adjourn. The voting strength of Conference at this last session (Tuesday, June 17) was about fifty disruptionist sympathisers and one hundred solidarity Laborites. The report of the returning officer, and two scrutineers from each side, announcing a fair ballot, showed the disruptionists to have been routed from every position. Repudiated by the Annual Parliament of Labor and by the composition of Conference, having no power for further mischief the enraged and defeated disruptionists withdrew from the Conference and proceeded to the Trades Hall to form a new party. A number of good party men and women, who had been previously misled, now had their eyes opened to the real spirit and intention of the would-be wreckers of the Movement.

**The Culminating Point Of Disruption**

The mover of “the motion from Wollongong” hired the room at the Trades Hall, and moved the resolution to form a new party. This same gentleman is President of the OBU.

A representative of *The Worker* was in attendance at the now party’s initial meeting. Mr Boote, editor of *The Worker*, would not allow *The Worker* report to create a false impression. *The Worker* report of this meeting contains the heading, “A New Party,” and quotes the motion carried which recommends unions and leagues to form a party prepared to fight for the establishment of a state of social democracy – compare with the wording of the Wollongong resolution again. The disruptionists must have their way. The solidarity of the Movement is quite a secondary matter!

These tactics follow precisely those of Hughes and Holman. Hughes walked out of the party room and formed a new party. Hughes said he was more Labor than the Labor Movement. So do the disruptionists in the present instance. One of them brazenly declares he is out to fight Tammanyism. This, if you please, is the man from Chicago! Another, “the mover of the motion from Wollongong”, declares that he will only support Labor simply because he could not swallow Nationalism”, and the “the Labor Party is not worth the support of any worker unless it is prepared to work for an Industrial Commonwealth”, as set forth in “the motion from Wollongong”.

The disruptionists have no substantial following. No one need be disturbed by their antics. But the Movement must know them for what they are. By seeking to divide us they do the work of the Employers’ Federation better than the capitalists could do it for themselves.

**Labor’s Policy**

The Australian Labor Party is a Socialist party; it believes in the Socialistic or Cooperative Commonwealth. It declares its aim to secure
the full results of their industry to all producers. That is the high water-mark of economic justice. While striving towards the Social or Cooperative Commonwealth it renders aid today to the mangled victims of the capitalist system.

It deals with the practical problems of the present, and seeks, by continuous and constructive effort, to evolve the new social order. Its methods are constitutional, not revolutionary.

It welcomes every honest recruit. It invites the submission of every scheme and idea.

It desires the abolition of the system of wage slavery, and the reconstruction of society upon the truly social basis in the quickest possible time and by the best conceivable methods.

It has no time for loud mouthed platitudes, meaningless shibboleths, and the ravings of wild-eyed demagogues that accomplish no practical result.

To all those who honestly wish to join in the great work of the social reorganisation of society, regardless of variations of view on minor matters, the Australian Labor Party offers the glad hand of welcome.

To the enemy without, to the foes of the working mass, we throw down the gage of battle. The emissaries of the capitalists, the spies and tools of autocracy, who do the work of Labor’s mortal enemies from within our ranks, will be treated as traitors are treated the world over. And, at this critical time, we call upon every well-wisher of the Movement to close up the ranks, give no heed to those who seek to destroy our solidarity and fighting spirit, but prepare for the grand assault which we shall soon be called upon to make upon the historic enemies of our class in both Federal and State arenas.

On behalf of the Executive,
WH Lambert, President
PC Evans, General Secretary
Sydney, June 23, 1919

(The Australian Worker, 26 June 1919)
CHAPTER 4
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 6 – 15 June 1920

Report in The Australian Worker

If 1916 had been a stormy and momentous year for the NSW ALP, 1920 was in some ways even more chaotic. There had been one notable success; at the State election on 20 March Labor had won the narrowest of election victories, gaining office with the support of one Socialist Labor MP and the willingness of one of the Nationalists, Daniel Levy, to act as Speaker. This was a remarkable achievement after the comprehensive split in the party over conscription less than four years before. However, in the extra-parliamentary parts of the Labor Party and the wider trade union movement new splits were opening up.

The factional machine put in place in 1915 had become almost completely unworkable, as it was split between the leaders of the AWU and a group of more radical industrial trade unionists and branch members associated with the syndicalist IWW or soon-to-be members of the new Communist Party (founded in 1920 in Australia). The documents reproduced below give some of the flavour of the collapse of the Industrial Vigilance Council which had controlled the Executive, and its replacement by direct factional control by the AWU. Many of the radicals left the party to join other organisations on the left of the ALP.

With the extremists effectively purged after the collapse of the IVC, the AWU had reasserted control in the State Executive elected at the 1919 Conference, with the result that the business of this 1920 Conference was completed within a week, and in relative harmony. The main arguments were over the question of whether the party should support the new electoral system of Proportional Representation or prefer a return to a system of single electorates. There were meetings on Monday and Tuesday of the following week, but a complete lack of interest meant that there was no quorum to make decisions. The Executive would make any significant decisions anyway.

The State Executive still maintained its suspicion of the politicians in the Storey and Dooley Governments (1920-22). One particular target of their anger was the Treasurer, JT Lang, who was condemned for his
refusal to pass on the full basic wage rises to public servants. The Executive threatened to block his preselection in Parramatta for the next election. Under faction boss John Bailey, the AWU and the Executive became heavily involved in preselection rorts over the next couple of years, but it is doubtful that they could have unseated Lang in his own electorate without a very bitter fight.

Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1919

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, Molesworth Papers: 71, Box 5)

[Editor’s Note: I have not been able to find a copy of the Executive Report for 1919. It is missing from the otherwise fairly comprehensive manuscript collections in the National Library (329.9944 AUS) and the Mitchell Library (ML MSS 329.3106/3). I could find no mention of an Executive Report in the Australian Worker or the Sydney Morning Herald, although it is mentioned very briefly on the floor of the Conference for Saturday, 12 June where it was “carried without discussion”. There is a reference in the Executive Report of 1920 to an “interim report” presented to this Conference. There is a likelihood that it was not published but presented in a roneoed form to the Conference. That would not be surprising, since 1919 was a chaotic year for the Executive, resulting in a split that saw the more militant unions break away to support a new Socialist Party (and eventually a Communist Party). The same year saw the collapse of the authoritarian faction known originally as ‘The Industrial Section’ – later renamed ‘The Industrial Vigilance Council’. There exists in the Molesworth Papers in Mitchell Library an Executive Report from the IVC for 1919, but it contains little detail other than a report on a disciplinary matter involving two members of the Tramways Union. In effect, the Executives of both the ALP and its IVC faction were completely immobilised by the factional showdown. In the absence of an Executive Report the view of the AWU fraction can be appreciated in the Presidential Address to Conference by WH Lambert, which took up much of the first day of this Conference. Meanwhile, it is worthwhile reproducing here from the Molesworth Papers the official report of the IVC on its own winding up, drafted by IVC Secretary, Voltaire Molesworth.]
Final Report. Issued by Instruction of Industrial Vigilance Committee

How IVC Was Disbanded

Owing to the fact that a number of the Executive officers of the IVC had joined a “bogus industrial section”, the President and Secretary decided to act according to Rule II of the constitution, which provides that: “Meetings of the Council will be held on the first Friday in each month, at 8 pm”.

Accordingly, acting under the rule, which says: “Meetings of the Council shall be called by advertisement in The Australian Worker”, the meeting was set down for Friday, August 1, and advertised in The Worker. As complaints had been made that persons other than delegates were participating in the Council’s business, the Executive had decided that only delegates representing financial unions and ALP branches should be admitted on presentation of badge.

Attempt to Pack Meeting

Steps were taken to ensure that only accredited delegates should attend the meeting, and events proved the wisdom of so acting, as about fifty of the disruptionists who were not delegates attempted to gain admittance. The Secretary (Mr Bartle) acted as guardian, and as delegates entered their names were checked in the official roll. No accredited delegate was refused admission. Messrs Graves, McPherson, Devlin, and other recognised members of the “bogus section” which had been meeting at the Social Democratic Hall, attended and participated in the business of the evening. About fifty of their “hangers on” also came along, and were annoyed to find that the rules were being strictly adhered to. Alternate delegates, where delegates were absent, were admitted, and, in the case of the Ironworkers’ Assistants’ Union, through the lamentable death of the former delegate (Mr J Burns), an authorised substitute (Mr Geo King) was admitted.

Owing to Mr Bartle acting as guardian, nominations were called for a minute secretary, there being two nominated – Messrs A McPherson and Vol Molesworth. The latter was appointed by 42 votes to 22. After the annual report and balance sheet (as printed elsewhere) were read by the minute secretary, it was adopted by 43 votes to 24. The report was criticised by Messrs G Howie, J Graves, and other “white anters” prior to its adoption.

“All Out, Boys”

At this stage Mr G Howie moved that those outside the meeting be permitted to attend the meeting if they could be vouched for. The chairman said he would put the motion to the meeting, though acting...
strictly under the rules none but duly accredited delegates had a right to participate in the meeting. At this Mr Howie said he did not want favors from the chairman who then said he would have to rule against the admission of non-delegates, following the constitution of the IVC.

At this Messrs McPherson, Graves and Rosa, who evidently had their plans cut and dried, jumped to their feet, one of them calling, “All out, boys”, thus repeating their tactics at the recent Labor Conference, and about fifteen of their followers left the meeting.

“Served Its Purpose”

On the motion of Mr Tyrrell (Municipal Employees’ Union) it was decided that the report and balance sheet should be printed together with a resume of the night’s business. It was further decided to follow the custom adopted at each annual meeting and authorise the presentation of some small token to the honorary secretary for the year’s work.

At this stage Mr C Last moved – “That this section of the ALP, known as the Industrial Vigilance Council, now disband”.

As one of the foundation members of the IVC, he said that it had long since done the work for which it was brought into being. It had purified the Labor Movement of Messrs Holman, Hughes, Hall and others, but of late had developed into a hunting-ground for place-seekers and would-be politicians of the Rosa type. The recent Conference had elected a good Industrial Executive, that could well be expected to give effect to those high principles for which the Labor Party stood.

The motion was seconded by Alderman Bramston.

After the question had been fully discussed, the motion was carried by 46 votes to 4.

Geo H Buckland, President
Thos S Bartle, Secretary
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1920

(The Worker, 10, 17 & 24 June 1920)

Day 1, Saturday, 5 June 1920

NSW Labor Conference. The President Reviews the Situation

Two hundred and fifty delegates were present at the Sydney Trades Hall last Saturday afternoon (June 5) when Mr WH Lambert, President of the Australian Labor Party (State of New South Wales), declared the Annual Conference open for business. The representatives from the trade unions and the various State leagues were about evenly divided.

It was apparent from the outset that the hostility which marred the proceedings of the last Conference was absent. Though at times there was plenty of noise, the proceedings generally were of a good-tempered character. The agenda paper placed before Conference was considerably smaller than in former years – consisting of 148 motions, with a couple of eleventh-hour additions. Generally speaking, the Conference now in session promises to be the most business-like that has taken place for several years.

Nearly a couple of hours were taken up with the purely machinery matters incidental to the Conference. Mr C Last was appointed Minute Secretary; Messrs AE O’Brien, J Power, J Andrews, T Arthur and Mrs E Seery were elected as an Agenda Committee; and Messrs Whitaker and Culvert acted as Timekeepers.

Daily Press Excluded from Conference

There was a lengthy debate on the question of the admission of the press. Mr AE O’Brien moved, and Mr F Dwyer seconded, that “the press, other than The Worker and the Labor News be not admitted to Conference”. Mr McGarry opposed the motion and was subjected to considerable opposition from delegates during the course of his remarks. He claimed that generally speaking the press had given them a fair deal at past Conferences. (Laughter) The Labor press was only issued weekly, and the only way a big section of the people had of knowing what was done was by reading the daily press. Conference had nothing to fear from the press, and they should be invited to attend. Everything was done fair and above board, and they should let the people know it through the medium of the daily press. He was opposed to anything being done by the Conference that had an underhand appearance.

Mr McGuinness (Clerks) said he was prepared to allow the press to attend if the press was prepared to allow them an opportunity to reply to
any of the misrepresentations made. If the press wasn’t prepared to do that, then let them be kept outside. (Cheers) It was not the reporters who did not give them a fair deal – the reporters were workers like themselves, and took accurate reports of the proceedings – but those who employed the reporters. The reports were hacked about and miscon- strued in the editorial offices of the newspapers. If the press was not prepared to give them the same amount of publicity to reply to misrep- resentations then they should be debarred from attending.

Mr A Blakeley, MHR, opposed the admission of the daily press. The Labor Movement would live without the assistance of the daily press. He would admit them if they printed all that was wanted, but they only printed what suited them. At one time he favoured the presence of the press, but he had since changed his mind. The daily press only printed what it thought would discredit them in the eyes of the public. If the public wanted a true and accurate report of the proceedings let them get it from *The Worker* and the *Labor News*.

A country delegate opposed the motion on the ground that everybody didn’t get the Labor papers, but depended on the daily press for their news.

Mr C Last said that in the past they had to remove reporters because the press misrepresented their proceedings. The reporters themselves might be fair to them, but the editors blue-pencilled the proceedings, and only allowed so much to go forth as suited them. He had consistently opposed the admission of the press.

Mr Steyne suggested that somebody be elected to draw up a report of their proceedings, and give it to the press. Then they would get a true reflection of the proceedings of Conference.

Mr O’Brien said there was no need for the suggestion, as a resume would be supplied to the press by the Secretary. The resolution only precluded admission of the press to misrepresent their ideas, not to preclude the giving of a resume of the business of the press.

The motion to exclude the daily press was carried by an overwhelming majority.

**“Strangers” Not Admitted**

Mr O’Brien then moved that nobody be admitted to Conference except those provided for under the rules, or by permission of the President. He objected to people being admitted out of curiosity or opposition to the Movement.

Mr G Sutherland supported the motion. He said that many people came to Conference who were antagonistic to the Labor Movement. This was a business Conference and the curious should not be admitted.
Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) opposed the motion. Mr Singleton said that the rank and file had a right to know their business. He favoured an amendment to admit those vouched for by delegates.

Mr TJ Swiney moved a further amendment, that the public be admitted on production of their Labor League ticket. Mr F Lagelow seconded. Captain Toombs asked if the mover meant the rank and file of the Movement, while Mr Baker favoured the amendment moved by Mr Singleton.

Mr TJ Smith (Fire Brigades’ Union) said that if the motion was carried it would mean that visitors would be smuggled in on the quiet by their friends. He was opposed to that. He favoured Mr Singleton’s amendment.

The amendment was carried by a large majority.

**President Lambert’s Address**

The President then officially declared the Conference open, and welcomed delegates. In the course of his remarks, he said:

I am pleased to be able to say that, notwithstanding the many disabilities and adverse circumstances that arose from time to time, we have fought two strenuous but successful election campaigns – the Federal and State elections in New South Wales.

During both campaigns the Movement, as usual, had the unanimous and bitter opposition of the capitalistic press, and many new shibboleths were created, and all kinds of fictitious issues raised. Practically every speech delivered by Labor candidates and Labor speakers was the subject of biased misrepresentation calculated to mislead the electors.

**Old War Whoops Exploded**

The press and enemies of Labor were hard pressed, for the most part, for a new war whoop. Bolshevism and IWW-ism, and most of the other old gags had already finished. However, as a result of the good work and enthusiastic support and co-operation of the rank and file of Labor men and women and ALP branch officers, and a large majority of the trade unions, we now have the satisfaction of having a Labor Government in power in the State and I feel convinced that we will find the Storey Government is the first genuine Labor Government in New South Wales.

**Party’s Programme and Urgent Reforms**

Although the majority of the NSW Labor Government is but a very narrow one, they no doubt will be able to give effect to many urgent reforms, and, I trust that the Government will be in a position to carry
out the programme of Labor. At the same time, taking into consideration the slender majority, it would be well not to expect too much from the present Government for the time being. Nevertheless, it will be necessary for the Party to concentrate on the twelve planks laid down as the objective of the Labor Party, and it will not do for them to mark time too long. If it is found that the programme of the Movement cannot be given effect to, another appeal for further power must be made to the people in due course.

There are many reforms which the Government of this State should be able to give effect to even with their slender majority at an early date, and one of the most important of these is the amendment of the State Industrial Arbitration Act and the Board of Trade. As the Arbitration Act stands at the present time it is useless, to a great extent, to the workers. It should be amended, and its operations extended to all workers, and the disabilities placed upon unions under the Act, prohibiting them from financially assisting the political Labor organisation, should be remedied without loss of time.

Arbitration, for some years past, and up to the present time, has stood as the policy of the Political Labor Movement, supported by the trades unions. That being the case, the workers are entitled to an Arbitration Act which will allow of their conditions, wages, etc., being dealt with expeditiously, fairly, and justly. The Government should see that the Arbitration laws of this State are administered in a just and sympathetic manner, and they certainly should not allow the Arbitration Court to be used in the interests of employers and in a biased manner to the workers, as has been the case to a great extent hitherto.

**Justice for Victimised Men**

The Government should lose no time in rehabilitating victimised unionists and deregistered trades unions to their former status as prior to 1917, and also to reinstate all the victimised workers to their former positions, with proper seniority as regards Government service.

Government Labor Exchanges, or Bureaus, under the so-called National Holman Government, have developed into a serious menace so far as the trades unions are concerned. It seems to have been the chief function of these bureaus during the last three or four years to supply non-union labour at less than award or union policy rates to employers throughout the country, while carefully boycotting the members of bona-fide unions who apply for work at these places.

The conditions on the waterside concerning the wharf labourers and coal lumpers must be finally and thoroughly cleared up. The coal lumpers should certainly have their union re-registered, and the scab bureaus around the waterside abolished, while the Coal Lumpers’ Institute and Model Lodging House, which were confiscated by the Holman
Government from these bodies, must be immediately returned. It will be remembered that these institutions were taken from the waterside workers and the coal lumpers by the Holman Government after the 1917 strike for the purpose of housing non-unionists and strike-breakers and members of bogus unions. This state of affairs cannot be tolerated any longer by the trade union movement. The vile and malicious victimisation of the wharf labourers and coal lumpers by the Holman Government must be knocked on the head straight away.

**Land Monopoly**

The Conference should give serious consideration to the matter of land monopoly in New South Wales with a view of inducing the Government to take the necessary steps to see that all available land is opened up for closer settlement. At the present time there are thousands of land seekers, who are unable to obtain a living area of land. Most of these are expert farmers and have all the necessary knowledge required by men to make a living on the land. At the present time there is over eighty million acres in the western lands division, and there is at least eight million acres of this suitable for immediate closer settlement. This land is in the hands of about 25 large companies or financial institutions. This land belongs to the Crown, but was leased to the present holders for a period of 40 years, the lease to terminate on the 3rd June, 1943. These lands have been leased at the notorious low rate of from ¼d to 2d per acre per annum. The western lands division comprises some of the finest land in New South Wales, and is suitable for closer settlement in areas of about eight thousand acres, whereas some of the financial institutions named have a million acres under their control. The Government should certainly make full inquiry into this matter with a view of revoking those leases and throwing the land open for closer settlement without delay.

**The Wheat Bungle**

The late Holman Government is deserving of the severest condemnation for its absolute failure to properly handle the people’s wheat. As a result of their inaction and stupidity in this matter, tens of thousands of tons of wheat have been ruined and wasted at a great loss to the country. Unscrupulous speculators and boodlers have been allowed to manipulate the wheat [market] under very suspicious circumstances, and have made huge profits at the expense of the country out of this commodity. When the Hughes National Government, in obedience to Imperial instructions, sold one million five hundred thousand tons of Australian wheat for the preposterous price of 5/6 per bushel, for delivery in 1920, the Labor Party denounced the transaction as a mad gamble in futures at
the expense of the Australian people. There was no surplus grain in 
Australia even then. There is no surplus grain now.

When in obedience to the bidding of some unknown authority, the 
Holman Government sold seven hundred and fifty thousand bushels of 
wheat at 4/4½ per bushel to the Georgeson gang, they knew that this 
wheat was urgently required to feed the people of the State and to keep 
the poultry and other industries going. The Royal Commission inquiring 
into this matter, so far as it has gone, has proved most objectionable and 
suspicious practices. Today, as a result of this muddle, there is not 
sufficient wheat in Australia to supply the people’s wants for either 
bread or fodder, and, as a result of this, millions of pounds worth of 
valuable stock are dying because a few avaricious, unscrupulous, and 
dishonest people were allowed to make hundreds of thousands of 
pounds at the expense of Australia, acting on inside information. If the 
wheat that we have on hand at the present time is delivered to the 
Imperial Government to carry out the contract made by Hughes without 
the authority of Parliament or the people, the people of Australia will 
have to buy it back at from 25/- to 30/- per bushel. This means that the 
person will have to pay anything from 1/6 to 2/- for a 2lb loaf of bread.

The Labor Party in this State, and in each State of the Common-
wealth, and in the Federal Parliament, should use every possible action 
in their power to prevent the exportation of the people’s wheat to foreign 
countries and to Great Britain. Not another grain should be allowed to 
leave Australia until we know where we stand.

Need of a Graduated Wealth and Profits Tax

When the Labor Government assumed office in this State they found that 
practically the whole of the Departments had been overdrawn to the 
extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the Treasury empty. As 
a result of this, they have been placed in a not very enviable position so 
far as the finances are concerned at the present juncture. There is a way 
out of this, however, and that way out is by the imposition of a 
graded wealth and profits tax. The Party should take into serious 
consideration the necessity of the imposition of a tax of this kind. The tax 
should start on profits of over £500 or £600 per year on a very low scale, 
gradually rising until it reaches a confiscatory point of large fortunes and 
large profits.

A tax of this kind would also act as a deterrent and a check on 
profiteers, because the more they profiteer the less they would make, and 
there would be then no incentive for the large business people to rob the 
workers.
**Electoral System**

The Holman Government, in its dying hours, introduced a new electoral system, which they called proportional representation. This system was introduced with a view of hoodwinking electors and obtaining a further lease of power for that discredited Administration. Notwithstanding all of the disabilities placed in the way of electors at the last State election under this system, Labor has obtained a slight majority. The Conference should give this matter careful and proper consideration, as it is obvious, as the Act stands, the electors cannot get a square deal. It seems to me that the Act should be amended and simplified, or the old system of single electorates should be reverted to. The whole thing was worked as a fraud during the recent elections, and, as a result, there was an enormous number of informal votes recorded. If these votes were allowed they would have been sufficient to give the Labor Party an overwhelming majority.

**The IWW Prisoners**

The Labor Government is pledged and has received a mandate from the electors to make a further and exhaustive inquiry into the trial and conviction of the twelve IWW prisoners, and if it is found that any of these men are not guilty they will be released, and should be compensated if it is found that any of these men are not guilty of any of the three charges against them. I think that the sentences should be reduced, and part of them remitted, as they appear to be altogether too severe. I understand that the Government has already taken the initial steps to bring this inquiry about.

**Attempt to Smash the Labor Party**

A few hours before the conclusion of the last annual Conference of the Australian Labor Party, I regret to say that a determined attempt was made to shatter the organisation of the Labor Movement.

Unfortunately, I was absent from the last two or three sittings of the Conference owing to influenza. At the last sitting of that Conference twenty or thirty delegates, who had signed the pledge in common with all other delegates to abide by the decisions of the Conference and the policy of the Movement as laid down, left the hall and held a meeting and carried resolutions to form a new political party in opposition to the Australian Labor party. These people afterwards called two or three conferences from a number of branches of the ALP and trades unions in the metropolitan area, mostly from minorities of those branches and unions, and carried resolutions to form a new party.
Eventually this new party was launched, and in the first place was given the name of the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Later a conference was called by these minority rulers between themselves and the Socialist and nondescript bodies opposed to Labor existing in the State, and eventually a fusion was effected. This body ran candidates against the Australian Labor Party both at the Federal and State elections, and generally opposed Labor candidates wherever possible.

It is gratifying, however, to know that although these people may have done a certain amount of harm, and perhaps were responsible for the defeat of odd Labor candidates and letting a follower of the Holman and Hughes Nationalist Parties in, the whole of the candidates that they put forward in the metropolitan area combined (including that unfortunate man, Mr Judd) received not more than about one thousand votes. This shows the infinitesimal backing which they had.

**Action of the Executive**

The arguments put forward by these people were that if the Conference did not adopt the Russian Soviet system of Government, and the preamble and objective of the so-called OBU, it was no good to them, and they had no time for it, and unless the Conference bowed to the will of this significant minority they would form a new party. As a result of this the Executive found it necessary to expel the leaders of this move from the Labor Movement. If the preamble and objective referred to had been adopted and tacked on to the Australian Labor Party’s Constitution, it would have been the end of the Australian Labor Party in New South Wales.

The Executive found it necessary to take a determined stand in this matter, and as a result the efforts of the disruptionists did not accomplish the purposes at which they were aiming, and the Movement has proved its solidarity by remaining loyal to the decisions of the Conference and of the governing body, the Executive, elected by the Conference. All members of the Movement no doubt recognise that it is absolutely essential to have a governing head or Executive for all movements; without that no organisation would stand, but would fall to pieces within twenty-four hours.

Delegates no doubt fully recognise the absolute necessity to stand solidly behind the decisions of the Conference and of the Executive, which are given from time to time as contingencies arise.

**Labor Party in Sydney Municipal Council**

At the present moment the Labor Party has the same number of members in the Sydney City Council as the Nationalists, there being thirteen on each side. Since the last municipal elections the Party has been giving
effect to the Labor programme in the Council as far as possible, and many big reforms have been brought about and the conditions of the workers employed by the Council very much improved.

The Party has established their own insurance scheme, under which the Council now insures its own property, saving the ratepayers somewhere like £10,000 per year. This amount, prior to the establishment of the scheme, went into the pockets of the big insurance companies. The Party have also laid down a minimum rate of wages of £4/2/6 per week throughout its services, and has increased the holidays of the workers employed, together with extending their annual holidays and increasing their sick pay. The policy of day labor is also strictly adhered to, and it is found much cheaper and more economical than the contract system. The policy of preference to unionists is also strictly enforced.

The Party now has under consideration the matter of the purchase of a coal mine and metal quarries for the Council’s own requirements, and intends to establish an electric power house at the mine wherever obtained in due course; this will largely reduce the cost of electricity to the people of Sydney and the metropolitan areas.

When the Labor Party were returned to the Council at the last city elections it was found that the previous Council had sadly neglected the city electric scheme, with the result that hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of new machinery was immediately ordered, and when this arrives in the near future city electric supply will be about doubled. The Council will be seeking powers to control the whole of the fish supply and other necessary commodities and foodstuffs, and will consult with the Parliamentary Labor Party in regard to those powers at as early a date as can be arranged. The municipal authorities are also anxious to see the Greater Sydney scheme given effect to in the near future.

The President was loudly cheered as he resumed his seat.

At this stage several “strangers” were noticed in the gallery and were ordered to leave.

Mr F Dwyer moved that the President’s report be adopted. Captain Toombs seconded.

Workers' Share in Control of Industry

Mr M Considine, MHR, said he regretted that not enough attention had been paid to the industrial section of the Movement. He thought the time had come for the control of industry by the workers. When they found workers in other parts of the world establishing control in industry, they should take some steps in the same direction in Australia. They should incorporate in their policy the workers’ right to a share in the industry. The Labor Government of the future should incorporate this in its platform and tell the people that in all industries controlled by the Government the workers would be given 50 per cent of the control.
Mr J Dooley, MLA, (Chief Secretary): It is already in the Labor platform and will be carried out within a month. (Cheers)

Mr Considine, referring to Broken Hill, said that no mention had been made in the President’s speech about the strike there. He thought something should have been said. He traversed the position regarding the split in the League at the Barrier. Although he had been ordered to support the Labor candidates, he refused point blank to speak in opposition to Brookfield – (cheers) – because he was not prepared to do an injustice to Brookfield, whom he considered to be as good a Labor man as any of them. (Cheers) He referred to a forged telegram sent from the Haymarket Post Office.

At this stage Mr Considine was ruled out of order, and the report was adopted.

**Chief Secretary Dooley Speaks**

Mr J Dooley, MLA (Chief Secretary), who was received with cheers, then addressed the Conference. He said he was glad to see some noise because it showed that the Conference was as hale and hearty as ever.

When he took up the position of Chief Secretary, he took up the stand that he would keep a close eye on all matters in his department. He had been amply rewarded by what he had discovered. Regarding unemployment, he gave instructions that no man was to be refused work, and while work was being found no man was to go without food. “It is part of our policy that no man should starve,” he added, amid cheers. “I have tried to tackle this problem as best I could, and I think I have done something to relieve the unemployment.”

Referring to the State Fisheries, he said he was going to reorganise the industry on the lines of the Labor platform, giving joint control to the workers in the industry. This would be in operation within a month. (Cheers) “You can bet that the workers in the industry will make a better fist of the business than the former management. At any rate, they could no do any worse. I have taken the drastic step of dismissing the manager, because I considered him incapable. I am going to take the stand that where I find an incompetent man he will have to go. (Cheers) The employees will elect their own representatives on the Board of management. All we want is your co-operation, assistance and advice. If you give us that, all will be well.

“We may fail in what we are doing, but if we do we shall fail doing our best. We have been elected on a definite policy, and intend to go right ahead with it. But if we cannot carry out Labor’s policy we will not remain on the Treasury benches but will come back to the people and ask for increased support.” Mr Dooley concluded by asking all Labor supporters to put their shoulder to the wheel and help do the things that Labor was destined to do.
Mr Cann and Unemployment

Mr Geo Cann, MLA, (Minister for Works), who was also received with cheers, said he was there to carry out the policy and platform of Labor, and he had the hardest job of the whole lot. He detailed what had been done with unemployment. No man would be allowed to go hungry under the Labor Government even if he could not get work at once. They had a hard job trying to place men in work, but they were succeeding. The unionists had had the life belted out of them during the last three years, and he didn’t blame them for being impatient. But he was going as fast as he could. They couldn’t do everything at once.

They should recognise that while much was not being done in legislation, they could do a great deal by administration, which, after all, was more important. They wanted to reinstate the 1917 victimised men and restore the seniority to men in the railways who had lost it in the strike. Regarding the men on the waterfront, they were in a most deplorable condition industrially, and they had to get the position back to where it was prior to the 1917 strike. The unionists must be given a chance.

“Well, here is what we’ve done so far,” said Mr Cann. “We’ve given the shipping companies a fortnight’s notice to quit the Coal Lumpers’ Institute. We’ve given the Coal Lumpers notice to move into their old premises next week. (Cheers.) As regards the Model Lodging House and Vinegar-lane, there are still a few little details to fix up, but the position there will be remedied within a short space of time.

“We are not moving as fast as I would like, because of our small majority. But if we cannot make proper progress we will not stay there any longer than necessary. I am quite prepared to sacrifice my £1000 a year job for the benefit of the workers. But give us a chance and I think we will be able to deliver the goods.” (Cheers)

NSW Labor Conference. Policy Speeches and the Platform.
Dealing with the Legislative Council.

Support for Broken Hill Men

After tea on June 5 the standing orders as passed by the last Conference were agreed to with slight amendments, including a new rule moved by Senator Gardiner, that the business paper be called over each day and matters declared to be formal passed on the voices of the delegates. In that way a great deal of time would be saved.

A letter was read from Mr G McCarthy, of the Telephone Construction Union, regarding his expulsion from the Movement, and asking that the matter be re-opened and considered by Conference. After a short debate a motion was carried that Mr McCarthy be allowed to state his case before delegates at a later stage.
Mr D Clyne moved – “That the Australian Labor Party appreciates the fight being put up by the Broken Hill miners for a six-hour day and gives them all moral support”. He thought delegates should be given an opportunity of showing their appreciation. The Broken Hill men were entitled to a six-hour day, considering the unhealthy nature of their work.

Mr M Davidson, MLA, seconded the motion, though he would rather have seen it worded differently. He thought they should go further and give the Broken Hill men financial as well as moral support.

Mr Clyne said he would accept that as an addendum to his motion.

**Direct Action Justified**

Mr Davidson pointed out that the Broken Hill men had tried all they could to get their grievances righted by arbitration, and had been forced to resort to direct action. They should be supported because the six-hour day was part of the Labor platform. The women and children were being starved at the dictates of the Broken Hill mine magnates, who were reaping huge profits out of their shares on the Stock Exchange, and were not prepared to come to terms with the men.

Could they blame the men for resorting to direct action when they found Judge Rolin the other day awarding miners £3/14/- a week, notwithstanding that the Board of Trade had declared £3/17/- to be the minimum living wage? He thought the Government should see what could be done in the way of revoking the Broken Hill leases, since the present mine owners had refused to work them.

Mr Huckle (Broken Hill) moved an amendment that the motion should include all unionists besides the miners who were fighting for a six-hour day. The amendment was supported by another Broken Hill delegate, who thought that the Labor Government should take some stand in the matter. If the Government threatened to resume the leases, the mine-owners would soon set about working them. The mines belonged to the people, and the Government should say how many hours should be worked in the industry.

Mr Considine, MHR, said the AMA and the Engine Drivers and Firemen were the only two unions on strike for the six-hour day. The others might be in favour of it, but they were not putting up a fight for it. He supported the original motion, because the miners were putting up the real fight. There was never another fight in the industrial history of the Commonwealth to be compared to the valiant fight they were putting up.

The amendment was carried unanimously.
Coal Lumpers and Conference

Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) drew attention to the Coal Lumpers not being represented at Conference. They had not sent delegates because they had been told that unless they paid their dues they would not be represented. Other unions in like circumstances had been accommodated in the past.

The General Secretary (Mr Carey) explained that the Coal Lumpers had not paid any dues since 1917. The Executive had decided that all fees must be paid before delegates could take their seats. That, however, did not debar them putting their case before the Credentials Committee, where possibly the union would receive favourable consideration.

Labor's Fighting Platform

Consideration of the agenda paper was then entered upon. Mr O’Brien moved, and Mr Steyne seconded – (1) “That the platform as adopted after collaboration between the Executive and members of the Parliamentary parties, be endorsed as the fighting platform, and be embodied in the rule book”; (2) “That the Mudgee and Balmain policy speeches of the Leader of the State Labor Party be adopted by Conference.”

Senator Grant said that if they carried the motion it would mean that all motions on the agenda paper dealing with the platform would go by the board. He questioned whether that would be a fair thing. He favoured debating the matter clause by clause. He moved an amendment in that direction, but it was defeated.

Mr Catts, MHR, hoped the Conference would adopt the platform as it stood. Mr Flannery, MLA, supported the motion.

Should Labor’s Objective Be Altered?

Mr Stuart Robertson, MLA, moved an amendment to strike the words “by the collective ownership of monopolies” out of the objective. He considered the words a snare, and said they meant nothing at all, except that it gave their opponents material with which to frighten small shopkeepers.

Mr J Power considered that the objective was a Federal matter, and Conference should not waste time discussing it. The objective should be the same in all States, and the phrasing of it should be left to the Interstate Conference. For the time being he thought it should remain as it was.

Mr W Hutchinson said he hoped the policy would be adopted as it stood, as it was the policy on which the Party was returned to power. If it was now altered it would give their opponents room to talk. Captain Toombs also took up the same attitude. Surely they were not going to go back on what Mr Storey, their Leader, had said. The capitalist
press had stated that the Labor policy announced by Mr Storey would only stand till the Conference met, when it would be altered. Were they going to do the very thing the capitalist press said they would? They should back up Mr Storey’s policy speech, to which the Party had been pledged before the country.

At this stage Mr T Arthur drew attention to the fact that a well-known Nationalist organiser was in the audience. For a few minutes excitement reigned, but the ‘stranger’ eventually left the hall.

The Conference adjourned at 10.30 pm till Monday evening (June 7).

Day 2, Monday, 7 June 1920

Fighting Platform Adopted

Discussion on the question, “That the platform, as adopted after collaboration between the Executive and members of the Parliamentary Parties, be endorsed as the fighting platform, and be embodied in the rule book,” was resumed on Monday evening (June 7).

After the President (Mr WH Lambert) had expressed as his opinion that the Interstate Conference should be the proper body to deal with any alteration of the objective, in order to prevent the possibility of the various States having different objectives, the amendment was defeated, and the platform (as printed) was adopted.

Mr Storey’s Policy Speech

On the motion, “That the Mudgee and Balmain policy speeches of the Leader of the State Labor Party be adopted by Conference”, Senator Gardiner raised an objection. He did not think it wise to put the vote of approval on every Leader’s speech. It was a bad precedent, and he didn’t think there was anything to be gained by it. There were always statements made on the eve of an election which were all very well at that time, but which would not suit them in the future. While he was wholeheartedly behind Mr Storey in his policy speech, he was opposed to putting the strength of the Conference behind the speech of any man, unless it was taken line by line and very carefully analysed. Probably, if Mr Storey himself had to contest an election at the present time, he would make a different speech.

Mr J Andrews said that if Conference didn’t endorse the Leader’s speech the opponents of Labor would ask how could they believe in what Labor was saying on the hustings when the Labor Conference refused to endorse what was said. He hoped Conference would endorse it.
Mr Mills said he was not in favour of endorsing the Leader’s policy speech because there were things absent from it which should have been in it. If Mr Storey wanted his policy speech endorsed why was he not at Conference to advocate its endorsement? There were many things in it that delegates were not familiar with, and they should not be asked to endorse it unless they saw what it was.

Mr McGarry considered that it was their duty to endorse it. Mr Storey’s speech was the platform on which they were elected, and in adopting it they were only backing up what Mr Storey had told the electors.

**Endorsed by Conference**

Mr Flannery, MLA, claimed that Mr Storey’s speech was an elaboration of Labor’s policy, with the addition of one or two matters considered necessary at the time. If they adopted it they approved of it as a policy. He favoured its adoption because there might be an election in the near future, and if they turned it down it would provide ammunition for their political opponents.

Mr Bramston also said that Mr Storey’s speech was in accordance with the Labor platform. They should endorse it, and keep the Parliamentarians up to what they said.

Mr J Power also urged its adoption. While there were passages in it open to improvement, if they turned it down that fact could be used against them by their opponents. At this critical time it would be injurious not to adopt it. Their opponents were saying that the pre-election speeches were of no value, and could be altered by Conference, and if Conference rejected the motion, it would play right into the hands of their opponents.

Mr Catts characterised it as really a vote of confidence in Mr Storey as Leader of the Party, and they should give his speech their endorsement.

The motion was carried on the voices.

Mr R W McKinnon was appointed returning officer and Messrs Gilligan and Easam scrutineers for the election of the new Executive.

**State Ministers Present**

The President (Mr WH Lambert) announced that Messrs Kavanagh, McKell, Dunn, Sproule, McGirr and G Cann, members of the State Ministry, were present, and would address the delegates.

Mr Dunn (Minister for Agriculture) thanked the delegates for the cordial welcome given to him, but he thought that members of the Party should thank the delegates for their work in Conference and in the State at large, which had been carried out without fee or reward. He hoped
that after he had been administering his department for 12 or 18 months they would receive him in the same cordial manner, because then he would know that he was doing his duty. He invited any man or woman in the rank and file of the Movement to call on him at any time. His office was always open to them, and he hoped they would come along with any suggestions they might have. It was not possible for a Minister to know what those under him were doing all the time, and he appealed to delegates that if they saw anything being done which was not in accordance with Labor’s policy to inform him and he would see that the right thing was done.

Mr McKell (Minister for Justice) said that up to date general satisfaction had been given by the Labor Government. The fate of the Party depended, in a large measure, on the deliberations of Conference, and he hoped the present Conference would be able to do much good for the Movement.

The Upper House Question

Mr Kavanagh (Vice-President of the Executive Council) said that he came to Conference to see if he could get volunteers for the Upper House. (Laughter and cries of “We’ll all go!”) He would want some men to make the great sacrifice of coming to help him in the Upper Chamber. (Laughter) He thought that the whole matter of the constitution of the Upper House should be investigated in order that they may see where they stood. Previously they had been told that the Lower House couldn’t abolish the Upper House, but there was no reason why they should not get fresh advice. He suggested the formation of a committee to get the highest constitutional advice as to what was the best method of abolishing the Upper House. If it could not be abolished without a referendum to the people, that course should be taken early. They should be prepared to carry out No 1 plank of the Labor platform, or wipe it out off the platform altogether.

Mr R Sproule (Solicitor-General) intimated that something would be done regarding the Upper House during the coming session, but he didn’t know whether they could carry out what they wished. However, he hoped to be able to come to the next Conference and tell them that No.1 plank of the platform was carried out. He concluded by saying that he was devoting a great deal of time to the rent question, and hoped to bring much matter affecting the workers before the next session of Parliament for discussion.

A Subsidy for Mothers

Mr McGirr (Minister for Health and Motherhood) said that the day of womanhood in the country was fast coming. Woman, after all, was the
greatest factor in the community, because she was responsible for the next community. There was a world-wide campaign going on for the advancement of woman’s status in life. He was asking the Government to agree to a subsidy of 7/6 for every child over the number of two in a family. This was not charity, but the State’s gratitude to mothers for doing their duty to the State. By carrying out this scheme the Labor Government would be doing something that would write its name on the annals of history the world over.

The question involved in the endowment of motherhood was a question which was going to revolutionise the politics of the world. It was not the final solution, but a step in the right direction. The money for the scheme would be taken from those who at the present time nursed poodle dogs instead of children, and from the capitalists who had made fortunes out of the blood and tears of the workers. If the Upper House threw out the bill they could go to the country on it, and he felt sure they would have the great majority of the people behind him in the fight for the mothers. The only people who could really object to it were the childless mothers of Potts Point and the capitalists who would have to foot the bill. He knew he would become unpopular with those folk, but if he was given the support of Labor he would go right ahead. He asked delegates to stand behind him and he would do his duty by standing by the mothers of the State.

Mr McGirr also made the announcement that the Government had set aside a sum of money to help children and expectant mothers during the winter. “If you know any little child who is without food or clothing during this bitter winter; if you know any mother about to bear a child who has not the necessities at hand for the babe coming into the world, let me know and I will see that they are provided for,” said Mr McGirr amid cheers. He went on to say that provision would be made for clothing, food, blankets, shawls, medicines, and so on.

A collection taken up on behalf of the wives and children of the Broken Hill miners totalled £12/0/6.

**Mr G McCarthy’s Case**

Following on a decision of Conference on the previous Saturday, Mr G McCarthy (Telephone Construction Union) addressed the Conference on the matter of his expulsion from the Movement, claiming that he had been unjustly dealt with. He denied that he was a disruptionist, or that he had done anything to further the breakaway from the Labor Movement last year. It was true that he attended the Industrial Conference last year, but so did many other delegates and secretaries of unions. But while he had been unjustly dealt with, others were not interfered with. As a matter of fact, several who took a prominent part in the discussions
of the Industrial Conference had run as endorsed Labor candidates for Parliament.

After a lengthy discussion, Senator Gardiner moved – “That this Conference, while approving of the able manner in which the Executive dealt with the breakaway section, and while censuring Mr McCarthy for attending a meeting against the instructions of the Executive, and having heard Mr McCarthy’s explanation, is willing to restore him to membership in the Party.” The motion was carried by 138 votes to 75. Conference then adjourned till Tuesday (June 8).

**Day 3, Tuesday, 8 June 1920**

**Applications for Reinstatement**

While the Conference resumed business on June 8 the President (Mr WH Lambert) read several letters received from persons who were expelled from the Movement as a result of their association with the breakaway party last year, and who now sought re-admission to the Movement. It was pointed out that probably there would be about 30 such applications to be dealt with. Delegates took exception to the time of the Conference being wasted on such matters when there was an agenda paper to be dealt with.

After a somewhat protracted debate, it was decided, on the motion of Mr Swiney, MLA, to refer all such applications to the incoming Executive for consideration. At the same time the President made it quite clear that the only applications that would be considered would be those where there was reason to believe that some error had been made. Under no consideration would active participants in the breakaway movement receive attention.

**Protest Against Deportations**

Securing a suspension of the standing orders, Mr G Sutherland moved a motion protesting against the proposed deportation of Father Jerger and the action of the Federal Government in deporting Mr FW Meyer, ex-Secretary of the Taxi-Cab Drivers’ Union. He charged the Federal Government with deporting working-class men, while wealthy Germans were allowed to remain in the country.

Mr Bell, who seconded the motion, claimed that many of the internees were hounded down and deported for political reasons.

Mr Lazzarini moved an amendment – “That the Conference protests against the deportation of Father Jerger and any other person from Australia without first giving them a trial in open court”.

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Senator Gardiner said there was another aspect to be considered. He wanted to put the case of the Germans who lived in German territory - at Rabaul – and who were interned for the safety of the country. But internment was not supposed to mean that they would be dealt with unfairly. British justice laid it down that no man should be punished without trial. Did they believe in capturing the country, taking the German non-combatants prisoners, and now robbing them of their private possessions? He was against deporting any man without a fair trial. He did not believe in punishing one internee and favouring another, as had been done by the Federal Government. He was no pro-German, but if they believed in justice they should grant justice to all - be they Germans or anybody else. He believed in a fair trial in open court for every man.

After further debate the amendment moved by Mr Lazzarini was carried.

Dealing with the Profiteer

The Lord Mayor of Sydney (Alderman Fitzgerald) was introduced to delegates, and delivered a short address on municipal matters. Mr McTiernan (Attorney-General) also addressed Conference. Referring to the work of the Necessary Commodities Control Commission, he said that Labor had got into power mainly on the question of anti-profiteering, and it was one of the first duties of the Government to do something regarding that question.

When he took control of the Attorney-General’s Department he found that the matter of price-fixing was merely a sideshow, and that no serious attempt was made to deal with high prices. He found a small staff with two inspectors, whose duty it was to try and stop profiteering. He wasn’t there long before he put on six inspectors, but more were required. But here was a new difficulty confronting the Government. The present Act was imperfect and only permitted of one Commission sitting for the whole State. As a matter of fact, there should be half-a-dozen Commissions at work dealing with different matters. On account of the limited power, the inspectors were able to send up more work than the Court could deal with, and the result was that the Court became clogged. That defect would have to be altered, while at the same time the proceedings would have to be more summary. Another serious defect was that every prosecution had to take place in Sydney. If there was a complaint from Broken Hill it had to be heard in Sydney. Power would have to be given to magistrates in different parts of the country to deal with charges of profiteering.

Mr Davoren moved a motion, “That the wheat contracts with the Imperial Government be suspended till August next”. He protested against the exporting of wheat from the country until all local
requirements had been satisfied. They should see where they stood in the matter of wheat supplies. Mr Barker seconded. The motion was carried on the voices.

The Upper House

Mr O’Brien moved, on behalf of the Executive, “That a sufficient number of Labor men and women be appointed to the Upper House to provide the Government with a majority in that Chamber”.

Mr Flannery, MLA, drew attention to the fact that no mention had been made in the motion regarding the abolition of the Upper House. He thought an attempt should be made to wipe it out. It had been said that Holman had gone into the question of abolishing the Upper House and found difficulties in the way. He was of the opinion that Holman didn’t really intend to deal with the matter, and that his nominees were put there to help perpetuate the nominee chamber. He suggested that the Government should first test the matter on the floor of the House, and, if they failed, make the abolition of the Upper House an issue before the electors. Then when they came back again they should swamp the nominee chamber. He moved the following amendment: “That Conference instruct the Government to make an attempt to abolish the Upper House, and failing that, a sufficient number of Labor men and women be appointed to the Upper House to provide the Government with a majority in the chamber.”

Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) supported the motion. In Queensland the Government had taken the matter to the electors and had been turned down. The people might do the same here. He thought the motion was the best way of dealing with the Upper House difficulty.

The Constitutional Aspect

Mr TJ Smith (Fire Brigades’ Union) said that when he went into Parliament three years ago he believed they could abolish the Upper House but his opinions had been changed by experience. He discovered that it was impossible to abolish the Upper House, and constitutional law supported him. There was a way, however, that they could deal with the problem. It should be dealt with in the same way as the British Government dealt with the House of Lords in 1910, by limitation of power. He moved a further amendment: “That a committee be appointed, consisting of three Parliamentarians and three delegates from Conference, to inquire into and report to the incoming Executive on the question of (1) the abolition of the Legislative Chamber, and (2) limitation of powers and functions on the lines of the English Parliamentary Act of 1910.”

Mr J Power said the Government should make an attempt to abolish the Council by constitutional methods already provided for. He
understood that the only way to get rid of the Upper House was by a vote of both Houses and the consent of the Imperial Parliament. They need not worry about the Imperial Parliament, as it would hardly refuse its consent if they carried out their part of the work here. They should make it plain what they intended to do in the matter. The rank and file of the Movement wanted to know what was being done. Then they wanted to know whether, if sufficient men and women could not be appointed to swamp the House, any would be appointed at all. That had to be made clear. Then again, if the Governor refused to make any appointments, what did they propose to do? That also had to be made clear.

**Labor Within Its Rights**

Mrs Seery supported the motion. She thought they would have a sufficient number of men and women in the Upper House to carry the Government’s measures. The Government had received a mandate from the people and were quite within their rights in demanding a majority in the Upper House.

Mr S Toombs favoured Mr Smith’s amendment. He said that while the constitution implied that they could make an elective chamber of it, they could not abolish it. They had to tackle the problem as they found it, and if there was no way of abolishing it, the next best thing to do was to draw its poison fangs.

Mr Bell thought it should be made quite clear that they were appointing Labor men and women to the Upper House with the one object of bringing about its abolition.

Senator Gardiner thought it was a fallacy to assume that they could not abolish the Upper House. Any self-governing country had inherent rights, even if not so written. If the Government recommended swamp-ing the Upper House and the Governor refused to make the appointments, they could do as Seddon had done in New Zealand – cut him off the salary list. That would bring the matter to a crisis. He claimed that a Government constituted by the will of the people was supreme. Let them make the recommendations, and if they were refused, go to the country and on the issue make it a people’s fight for freedom. Unless they were prepared to do something it was no use wasting time to talk.

The original motion moved by Mr O’Brien, was carried on the voices.

**Nominations to be Called**

Mr O’Brien then moved, on behalf of the Executive: “That the Executive call for nominations in the usual way, and, after endorsement, refer the total number so endorsed to the Parliamentary Labor Party for their selection of the number required”. This motion was carried after a short discussion.
The Electoral Act

Mr O’Brien moved on behalf of the Executive: “That the Government amend the Electoral Act to provide for single electorates”.

Mr T Carmody, in seconding the motion, said the present system was too cumbersome and had caused no end of friction among the Labor candidates themselves. It had also caused a great deal of trouble and dissatisfaction to the electors, and should be done away with.

A country delegate opposed the motion, claiming that it was better than the old system. It had given them a majority in Parliament and had secured them representation in electorates where they would never have gained a seat under the old system.

Mr Farrell supported the motion. The new system would rend the Movement apart if it was continued. Men were at one another’s throats during the last campaign, and they should step in, nip the scheme in the bud, and restore the old system under which they at least had unanimity in their own ranks. He pointed out that in the city where the big industrial vote was they had been beaten, and it was only the country that saved them.

Mr Webster claimed that the Labor Government would make no progress under the new electoral majority. Another point worth noting was that under the new system it cost much money to contest an election, and only wealthy men would be able to nominate. Had they had the old system at the last election they might have secured between 50 and 60 seats, instead of having to depend on independents to keep them in power.

Mr O’Dea opposed the motion, claiming that under the new system they had secured representation in new places, such as Byron, for the first time.

The Conference adjourned till the following evening.

Day 4, Wednesday, 9 June 1920

Reversion to Single Electorates. Revocation of Western Leases

Mr Storey Addresses Conference

On Wednesday evening (June 9) Mr J Storey, MLA, Labor Premier, was introduced to delegates and received a warm welcome. He said that although he had been in office only eight weeks, the responsibilities of the office had made it appear like eight years. This was the first opportunity he had of coming to the rank and file of the Movement and thanking them for their help at the last elections. He reminded them that only a year ago it seemed as if the Labor Movement was rent in twain,
yet today they were more solid than ever. Holman had said some time ago that there would never be a Labor Government in power in the State for a generation, since the brains had left the Party. But apparently Holman had made a miscalculation. The party was in power, and the brains had not left the Movement, despite what Holman and his friends had said.

He took no particular credit to himself for winning the election. It didn’t matter who was leading the Movement – so long as they were doing the right thing, they would win. Their opponents used to say that when they got to the Cabinet room they would not know what to do. It wasn’t that they didn’t know what to do – the trouble was that they didn’t know what to do first.

**Government Not Wasting Time**

The Premier said he had a good working team of men, and hoped to do something. In fact, they had done a lot of things already. He was not like Holman who would have come to the Conference, make a lot of promises, bid them goodnight and then disappear till next Conference. He would not make any promises to them – he believed in doing the work and then coming to tell them what had been done.

Some supporters had claimed that they were not moving fast enough. He had to tell those critics that if they weren’t legislating they were at least administering, and that was an important factor. For one thing, they could rest assured that the bosses wouldn’t be running to the Government and prompting it to jail men as they could do in Holman’s time. At the same time, he had to say that if they couldn’t carry out Labor’s policy they would not remain in power, but would go to the country and ask for increased support.

Referring to the Broken Hill trouble, he reminded them that he was doing more for the Barrier men than some of them were prepared to do for him when the elections were on. It wasn’t the fault of the Government that the recent negotiations had failed. But the Government wasn’t forgetting the men on strike, and would do all it could to bring an end to the present trouble. Mr Storey concluded by referring to the many difficulties facing the Government at the present time.

**Mr Mutch Speaks**

Mr Mutch (Minister for Education) also addressed delegates. He said it was amazing that some people were expecting them to do everything in five minutes. The Government was doing all it could for the workers, but delegates should remember that it had to go slowly – having to depend on three Independents for support. If delegates did not think the
Government was moving fast enough, let them carry a motion that it resign, and they could have his resignation at once.

There had been a great deal of talk the previous night about abolishing the Upper House, but he suspected that many of them were in favour of perpetuating it. Why was it that so many delegates were trying to get into the Upper House? Were they sincere in their intentions to abolish it? The Government would make sure of the men it would appoint there, and if it wasn’t assured that they would do the duty for which they were appointed, none would be appointed.

He said he had been elected to carry out a definite policy, and he wasn’t going to budge from it one inch. If they didn’t agree with him, let them say so, and he would resign. Labor couldn’t get everything for nothing, and he wasn’t going to humbug them by promising them everything in five minutes. He confessed that his present job was the most difficult he had ever undertaken. He referred to the work of the Education Department and the necessity for building new schools and improving the old school buildings.

**Debate on Electoral System**

Discussion was then resumed on the motion “That the Government amend the Electoral Act to provide for single electorates”.

Senator Grant favoured the restoration of the single electorates. Many people thought that proportional representation would work out alright for the Labor Movement, but it had not. He hoped that it would be knocked out and the old system restored.

Mr McGarry said he had carefully analysed the position, and came to the conclusion that proportional representation was the best for the people. If they had another election they would secure a bigger majority under it. They could hold the present seats and gain at least eight more. The main objection was not to the system itself but to its working. He moved the following amendment: “That Conference send a recommendation to the Parliamentary Labor Party to amend the electoral law, that voters be not asked to sign their names to the roll, that steps be taken to simplify the system, and that the incoming Executive take the necessary steps to prevent candidates acting in a manner likely to cause dissension amongst themselves”.

**Old System Better**

Mr Catts, MHR, said that both the Parliamentary Party and the Executive had recommended a return to the single electorate system, and he thought that Conference should endorse their action. He claimed that the present system was a prostitution of the electoral law. It created new factions and new parties against existing forms of government. It was all
a gamble, and under it it was impossible to work out the organisation to bring proper results. Had the last election been fought on single electorates they would have had about 55 seats. The Progressive Party had admitted that it got into Parliament because of it, and if it had not existed the Labor Party would have won more seats. He claimed it was associated with intrigue, disruption, and dissension.

Mr W Hutchinson was against the motion. He had spent two years as a member of the Disputes Committee, and had seen just as much intrigue in the selections under the old Act as under the present system. He had contested seats under both systems and stood for the present one.

Mr W Young (Rozelle) favoured single electorates. The proportional representation system did not do away with selection ballots, so they would still have dissension, while in addition there was dissension in the electorates. Rather than go through another campaign under proportional representation they would do well to get back to the single electorate system. Under the new system they were weaker in the metropolitan area than formerly, whereas they looked to the metropolitan area to give them the biggest support.

Mr Storey’s Opinion

Mr J Storey (Premier) said that it appeared to him that some were saying “I’m alright in my pocket borough, and to Hell with everybody else”. The party had come to the decision to revert to single electorates during his absence in Melbourne. It was all very well to say that they could have won 55 seats under the old system. Well, they gained 15 seats under proportional representation. How many seats would they have got at North Sydney, Byron, and other places under the old system? Would they have beaten Holman under the old system? They should not knock it out, but try and better it. They were doing the wrong thing by taking a leap in the dark to satisfy the men with a pocket borough who were just as safe under the old system.

He suggested that the matter be referred to a committee to go carefully into the scheme with all the figures before them. Then they could come to a practical decision. Holman, who was the biggest political thimble-rigger this country had seen, was personally opposed to it. Wasn’t that the very best reason why they should be in favour of it? They should not forget that it had provided them with a Government, and if they returned to the old system then they relied on a fluke to return them. He had studied the system, had won under it, and if they took his advice they would stick to it.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, favoured the single electorate system. He was also of the opinion that they could have won about 55 seats under the old system. Then, again, the new system was more expensive than the old system, because of the enlarged size of the electorates. He didn’t
wish to go through another election under proportional representation. It lent itself to corruption, and disrupted the whole of the Movement at the last election. Then they should remember that at the last election they were on the hustings condemning it. Were they forgetting that point? He claimed that under it the man with money had an advantage over the candidate with no money.

**Fighting for Number One Votes**

Mr Blakeley also favoured the motion. Mr Storey had said that the new system had given them a majority but his opinion was that Labor had won despite proportional representation. He referred to the personal vilification that took place at the last election and the intriguing amongst candidates to get number one votes. They had only to look on some of the hoardings of the city to see how one candidate had plastered his name over others in order to try and score over his fellow candidates. Under the present system corruption was rampant. While they had men fighting amongst themselves as to who should have the number one vote, how could they have solidarity in the Movement?

Mr S Toombs said that he had suffered under both systems. What they should do was to try and remedy the defects in the present system. He showed how, under the old system, men elected to city electorates had huge majorities which were lost, but which under proportional representation went to help their comrades in the fight.

Mr McTiernan (Attorney-General) favoured proportional representation. If there had been such huge disension in the Party at the last election how was it that the Party was so solid today? They should remember that under the new system they had done a great deal of propaganda work in the enemy’s camp. They had won seats in the country which, if they returned to the single electorates system, they would lose. The opponents to proportional representation based their arguments on theory, but the fact remained that the Government was in power because of the system.

Mr Keniry (Kensington) favoured a return to the old system, because under the smaller electorates they could better consolidate their organisation. He claimed that the present system was a negation of democratic government.

Mr JE Hoad claimed that 25 per cent of the delegates did not understand the system. He suggested that it be referred to the incoming Executive to be dealt with.

**Honest Candidates Penalised**

Mr Mutch (Minister for Education) supported the motion. The present system had been responsible for the greatest amount of unscrupulousness
that he had ever known. No electoral system could be justified unless it
registered the clear will of the electors, and how could this be done when
they were asked to discriminate first between the Labor candidates, and
then between their opponents? How could they decide whether one Labor
man was better than another? The present system placed unscrupulous
men at an advantage over the men who wished to be honest. At first it was
intended to leave all the voting cards blank but when they found that
unscrupulous men were marking them for themselves they all had to do it.
Did that make for solidarity in the Party – one man fighting against
another for the number one vote? The proportional representation system
did not smash the political machine – on the other hand, it strengthened it,
and those who were best able to manipulate it got into Parliament. He
predicted that at future elections new parties would get in at the expense
of the Labor vote. The Labor Party didn’t win because of unrest, the high
cost of living, and the various scandals. The new electorates were far too
big to look after, and he hoped they would get back to the old system.

Mr Swiney’s Suggestion

Mr Swiney, MLA, moved, as an amendment: “That a committee of 15 be
appointed – seven from the Parliamentary Party and seven from the
incoming Executive, with the President of the Conference as chairman –
to go thoroughly into figures and investigate the possibilities and
potentialities of the new system for the purpose of furthering the
interests of the Movement and report to Conference next year”. He said
he hadn’t heard one argument that would induce him to return to the old
system. Under proportional representation there was cleaner fight-
ing.

Senator Gardiner opposed the new system, which he said was not
real proportional representation. He had acted as a scrutineer and found
it to be undemocratic. It did not do what it claimed to do. He did not
dwell too much on the ill-feeling that had been created, because their
opponents had that in their ranks as well. But the system lent itself to
intrigue. Although they had won the elections under it, they should
remember that they had the best chance of getting a huge majority
because of the wheat and other scandals. He didn’t think that the new
system had helped them into power. It was his deliberate opinion that
Governments throughout the world, realising the rising tide of demo-
cracy, had introduced the system in order to ensure small majorities
which they could buy up at any time.

The Conference adjourned till the following evening (June 10).
Day 5, Thursday, 10 June 1920

Not True Proportional Representation

The discussion was resumed on the following evening (June 10). Mr Mills (Wharf Labourers) said that most of the speakers gave their experiences under the new system, but the system itself had not been thoroughly dealt with. He favoured true proportional representation, but he would not support the kind that Holman had placed on the statute book.

Mr Burke (Petersham) pointed out that at the last elections candidates were working against each other. He favoured the motion.

Mrs Fowler favoured single electorates. She said that they could have got two seats in Namoi, and another two in Goulburn had they been contested on the single electorate basis. Thousands of electors were disfranchised because they did not understand the new system.

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, said that while proportional representation suited him alright, he favoured single electorates because the smaller electorates enabled candidates to get a better grasp of things. Under the new system they could not go out and help weaker candidates in the country, because if they did they had one of their own candidates stabbing them in the back in trying to sneak their number one votes.

Mr Mostyn (Electrical Trades) favoured the motion, and expressed the opinion that they lost seats under the new system that could have been won under the old system.

Mr Steyne favoured Mr Swiney’s amendment. He pointed out that delegates had spoken around the matter without any technical knowledge. The matter should be gone into scientifically. There was no immediate hurry to come to a decision on the matter.

New System Would Help Opponents

Mr G McGirr (Minister for Health) said it didn’t matter to him personally what system was in operation. But for the benefit of the Movement he hoped the motion to revert to single electorates would be carried. It was generally the man with the most money who could win under the present system, while it lent itself to more corruption than any other system he knew. He pointed out that in any country that had it for any time Labor never managed to get a big majority, if a majority at all. He instanced Tasmania and Belgium. Then they should remember from whom the measure emanated. It came from Messrs Huie and Ley, and was really a measure to put the Progressive Party into Parliament. Were the Progressives the friends of Labor? They represented greater interests than the Nationalists did, and were only marking time till the next election when, if the present system wasn’t altered, they would win more
seats at the expense of the Labor Party. Had the single electorate system been in force at the last election they would have had a majority of about ten instead of having to depend on Independents at the present time. He claimed they could win 15 new seats at the next election, if they reverted to the old system.

Scheme Defeated

Mr Davidson, MLA, referred to Mr Storey’s statement that he had always been an ardent supporter of proportional representation, and quoted from “Hansard” of November 27, 1918, to show that Mr Storey had voted against it along with himself when it was first introduced by Mr Ball (Nationalist). He didn’t say this out of any hostility to Mr Storey, but in order to put right with the Conference. As for the scheme itself, practical experience had convinced him that it was useless. He represented half the State, and was only able to touch the fringe of his electorate during the campaign.

Mr A McClelland, MLA, stood for it with amendments. He had won under it, and had lost under the old system. He thought, too, that under the new system Laborites had better representation throughout the State. What representation would they have had in Namoi, Northern Tablelands, or Byron under the old system?

On the matter going to a vote, all the amendments were defeated, and the original motion was carried unanimously.

Mr Ryan Addresses Conference

The President (Mr WH Lambert) introduced Mr TJ Ryan, MHR, who was received with loud cheers.

Mr Ryan, in addressing delegates, said he wanted to take an early opportunity of replying to a persistent rumour that he intended to take a high judicial position. He gave it an emphatic denial. He had no intention of leaving the political movement, but wanted to help Labor all he could on the political field. He attributed their non-success in the last Federal elections mainly to the lack of organisation and funds. They also had a hostile press against them. The way in which the Federal elections were conducted convinced him of the necessity of altering the law by which the capitalist press could be dealt with for libelling Labor candidates. It would be a very important amendment in the interests of Labor, and he hoped they wouldn’t forget to make a change in the method of trying libel actions. The manner in which they were attacked during the last Federal elections was simply scandalous, and there should be some means by which they could deal with the capitalist press.

He was glad Conference had passed a resolution on the question of deportations, though to his mind it did not go far enough. He considered
it a mistake to centre the discussion around individuals instead of dealing with the principle of the thing. He believed no person should be deported, and if any man was charged with wrongdoing, he should be given a trial in open court and punished in this country. But the Government deported the men without even giving them a trial. He hoped that they would be fully alive to this damnable system and not stand for such a thing. A few soldiers, who didn’t by any means represent the great body of the returned men, were holding meetings, and even threatening violence. They should see to it that a few “brass hats” should not be allowed to make it believed that they spoke for all the returned men.

**Imperial Federation Menace**

A distinct attempt was being made to bring about Imperial Federation – not openly, but under the lap. Mr Watt was making proposals for the consolidating of the Empire debts. That meant Imperial Federation without the consent of the people. The next thing would be that there would be one taxing body for the Empire. He hoped they would be alive to this new menace. The present financial situation of the Empire provided a good opportunity for Imperial Federation, but they should make it plain that the financial business of this country would be managed in the country. He drew attention to the fact, too, that capitalists in London were commencing to dictate as to legislation, and were even threatening Governments that, if they passed this or that legislation, finances would be cut off.

He congratulated delegates on having a Labor Government in New South Wales, and it was the dawn of better days for the State. The Upper House was a problem that could be dealt with, although a very slow one. There was said to be something in the Constitution that no matters affecting the Upper House should emanate in the Lower Chamber, but if that was so, then they had to alter the law.

He urged the maintaining of solidarity in the Movement, and hinted at the possibility of an early Federal election. He hoped they would be ready for all emergencies. Above all, Labor must be a solid body. The Federal Government had proposed a convention to discuss alterations to the Constitution. It was necessary that Labor should have some definite policy on the matter. The State and Interstate bodies should lay down some common policy so that when the time came they could pull together on the question.

**Members to Sign Platform Pledge**

The Berrigan Branch of the ALP moved – “That all members and future members of the ALP be compelled to sign the platform pledge; also that
the General Secretary be instructed to issue books of tickets with place for signatures.” The motion was carried without discussion.

Enmore Branch moved - “That Rule 46 be amended to provide: ‘No Labor candidate shall sign any pledge or undertaking of any other group, organisation, or party’.” This was also carried without discussion. A motion from Gilgandra Branch - “That all married men have the same right to land tenure as any other individual in New South Wales” - was ruled out of order, the President pointing out that all men, married or single, had equal rights under the law. A motion from Albury Branch - “That where land has been taken up under improvement lease, the occupier be not allowed to convert it into CP unless he has not otherwise a living area - was also ruled out of order on the ground that it was already in the platform.

**Extension of Fair Rents Court**

Mr J Power moved, on behalf of Paddington Branch: “That Local Governments be clothed with powers of the Fair Rents Courts”. He said the measure was very necessary. The workers had their wages fixed, and should have some protection by the fixing of rents from the boodling landlords. It was impossible for one Fair Rents Court to deal with all the business coming before it.

Senator Grant said that the root of the evil was the land question. They would have to find some means to cheapen land in order that homes might be built. While the present scarcity of houses existed the rents would continue to be high. The motion was carried on the voices.

Sans Souci Branch moved: “That the Executive call an Annual Conference of pledged Labor aldermen and councillors in the State to discuss matters of mutual interest and local government generally”. The motion was carried.

Mrs Stewart moved: “That the Sydney City Council be requested to provide, without further delay, conveniences in the city for women and girls, with toilet and other articles pertaining to hygiene, and that these be on sale at such places”. The President pointed out that this was already part of the Municipal Party policy, and provision was being made for carrying it into effect. The motion was carried.

Enmore Branch sought to move a motion: “That provision be made in the ALP rules for the appointment of a treasurer, who shall control all administrative and fighting funds of the ALP,” but the President ruled it out as being superfluous, since a Finance Committee was already provided for under Rule 29.

Mr Binder moved on behalf of Sans Souci Branch: “That all members of the Central Executive, including the General Secretary, shall be ineligible for selection unless resigning from the Executive six months
previous to elections taking place”. The motion was ruled out as an encroachment on the rights and privileges of members.

Conference adjourned till the following evening (June 11).

Day 6, Friday, 11 June 1920

Land For Closer Settlement

On Friday, June 11, Conference discussed motions of which notice had been given. Owing to the unavoidable absence of the President, Mr AE O’Brien (Vice-President) was in the chair.

Senator Gardiner moved a motion for the appointment of a committee to prepare resolutions for submission to the Convention which will be called to deal with alterations to the Commonwealth Constitution. The motion was carried and Messrs Bailey, Catts, Ryan, Arthur, Power and Grant appointed to the Committee.

Mr C Last moved: “That Conference urges upon the government the immediate necessity of revoking the leases now held by the large land companies in the eastern portion of the Western Land Division, and make same available to bona fide seekers in 8000 acre blocks under a leasehold tenure.” He said they should burst up the locked lands in the West and make them available for closer settlement. He showed how the squatters got the land on long leases at nominal rentals, and claimed that these leases should be revoked even if they had to pay compensation. If they didn’t find land for the bona fide settlers there was going to be trouble in the near future.

Mr Flannery, MLA, suggested that the Parliamentary Party should be consulted on the matter. He didn’t think it wise for the Conference to carry a resolution which practically amounted to a demand on the Party.

Mr Burke (Petersham) said it was impracticable as it stood. To make it workable they would have to deal with the State as a whole.

66,000 Farmers Without Land

Mr Catts, MHR, was opposed to the wording of the motion. To revoke the leases would mean that they would have to pay heavy compensation. Before fixing 8000 acres as a living area they should get some idea as to what really was a living area. Settlement on land was a most important matter just now. There were 16,000 returned men and 50,000 farmers who could not get on the land because there was no land for them.

Mr T Arthur moved an amendment that the matter be referred to the incoming Executive to discuss it with the Parliamentary Party with a view of bringing about the declared policy of the Labor Party. He
thought that the matter could very well be left in the hands of the Parliamentary Party.

The motion was carried by 83 to 44 votes.

**Regarding Election Funds**

Mr McAuley moved a motion having for its purpose that contributions for the election expenses of individual candidates should be paid into the general funds, so that they could be controlled for the use of the Movement rather than for the use of the individual. He said there was an impression that at the last election individuals were financed by individuals who were not concerned with the advancement of Labor. His motion would give some idea as to where the funds came from and what they were. The motion was lost.

Mr J Farrell moved, and Senator Grant seconded: “That Conference urges upon the Government to include in its programme as one of the first measures a bill to amend the Metropolitan Board of Water and Sewerage Act and the Hunter River Water Supply and Sewerage Act to provide that the water and sewerage rates be imposed on land values only”. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Returned Soldiers and Employment**

Mr WA Gibbs sought to move a motion to repeal the Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Employment Act in view of the fact that the Government was committed to a Right to Work Bill. Mr Catts moved an amendment: “That in view of the fact that the employment columns of the daily press prove that employers generally publicly flout the Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Preference Act, and that the principle of the Act is iniquitous and impracticable, the Government should repeal the measure”. The amendment was carried by 68 to 48 votes.

Mr Kelly (Ryde) moved: “That Conference take into consideration the advisability of forming a committee to go into the matter of a daily newspaper”. There was no discussion, and the motion was carried.

A motion moved by Mr Keniry (Kensington), providing for a State-owned woollen mills with a view to cheapening the cost of clothing, was also carried.

Mr T Arthur moved a motion that consultation sweeps be run on the lines of the Queensland Golden Casket sweeps for the benefit of the Labor Movement. The motion was carried.

**Lunacy Act Amendment**

Mr H Lockhard (Canterbury) moved: “That the Government amend the Lunacy Act”. He pointed out that at present when a man became insane
the first charge on his estate was for his upkeep. He thought that the first charge should be for the welfare of his wife, children, or any other dependents. It wasn’t right for the Master in Lunacy to seize everything.

Mr Mitchell (Hospital Employees’ Union) seconded the motion, and said that the matter had already been referred to the Government, and that action was being taken. The fault lay with those administering the Act and not with the Act itself. They had asked for administration by the Public Trustee and not by the Master in Lunacy, whose office should be abolished.

The motion was carried and Conference adjourned till the following day.

Day 7, Saturday, 12 June 1920

Case of Mr Scott Campbell

When Conference met on Saturday afternoon (June 12) Senator Gardiner moved the suspension of the standing orders to deal with the case of Mr Scott Campbell, whose candidature for Eastern Suburbs was withdrawn by the Executive during the recent State elections. He said he wished to appeal against that decision. The Waverley League had also appealed to the Executive on the matter.

Mr T Arthur thought that the Conference had carried a resolution that all such matters be referred to the incoming Executive for consideration. The President (Mr WH Lambert) ruled that the only cases referred to the incoming Executive were those associated with the breakaway movement last year.

Senator Gardiner said he had no desire to censure the Executive in the matter and he didn’t think the matter would take long to consider if delegates were prepared to hear the facts. Delegates, however, by a majority, decided not to hear Senator Gardiner.

At that Senator Gardiner moved towards the door, stating that as he had been denied an appeal by the Conference he would state his case in the public press and endeavour to call a special conference on the matter.

The President said he took it that the matter would still be considered by the incoming Executive. Senator Gardiner was heard to shout as he was leaving the Conference, that if he could not get a special conference to deal with Mr Scott Campbell’s case he would resign from the Movement and also from the Senate. He would not sit amongst men and women who were not prepared to hear an appeal for justice.
Constitutional Amendments

Mr Catts presented the report of the Committee appointed to go into the matter of the proposed Federal Convention to deal with amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution. The motion, which was signed by Mr Catts (chairman), Messrs TJ Ryan, J Grant, J Bailey, J Power and T Arthur (members of the Committee), was as follows:

“That this Conference, representative of the Australian Labor Party of New South Wales, protests against the proposal of the Commonwealth Government to constitute a Federal Convention of specially selected interests to advise upon amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution. Should any such convention be set up, however, we insist that it shall be elected by the people of Australia themselves.

“We regard the proposed convention as a useless waste of public money, inasmuch as it can only report in an advisory capacity to the Federal Parliament, and cannot possibly act of itself.

“In our opinion the Federal Parliament elected by the people and charged under the Constitution with the responsibility for submitting proposed amendments to the people by referendum, is the proper body to consider and decide what constitutional alterations are necessary.

“That this determination be referred to the Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party in each State, and also to the Federal Executive, asking their concurrence.”

The report was moved by Mr Catts, and seconded by Senator J Grant and carried on the voices.

The Victimised Men

Mr Whitaker moved that the Government be recommended to put into effect the railway and tramway policy regarding the 1917 victimised men. The President stated that the Government had already outlined its policy, and that action was being taken. Mr Whittaker claimed that this was not so. He wanted the men to get back their old rates of pay, positions, and privileges. The men who were going back were being put into lower positions. He wanted them back in their old jobs and the “scabs” booted out of the service.

Mr AE O’Brien detailed what had been done in consultation with the Unions on the matter. As a result there was an understanding that the men were going back into their old jobs, or into positions equivalent to what they had prior to the strike. The Government was doing its utmost in getting the matter fixed up.

Mr Bailey, MLA, moved as an amendment, that the matter be dealt with by the incoming Executive. The Railway Commissioner had agreed to meet the Cabinet and discuss the matter. The view taken by the Party was that if the men were not reinstated either the Railway Commissioner or the Cabinet would have to go. He was sure the Ministry would do its
duty to the men, no matter what Mr Fraser thought about it. If Mr Fraser didn’t put the men back then the Party would want to know something about it.

Mrs Kirwin seconded the amendment. Her son had been victimised, and though he had been put back he could only get temporary employment. She knew another man who applied for reinstatement who had been told by the Department that the victimised men were “dead men” as far as getting their old jobs back was concerned. She also pointed out that the “loyalists” did not have to go through eyesight and medical tests, as the unionists had.

“The Men Must Go Back”

Mr Mooney claimed that it was all talk about reinstating the men. He was a victimised man. The Commissioner was the ruling authority, not the Party or the Premier. He wasn’t satisfied with the attitude of the Government on the matter. It wasn’t moving fast enough. No doubt they were very sincere, but that wasn’t getting the men back. It had been a hot question at the last election, and they had received a mandate from the people, and the re-employment of the men should be carried out at once. He thought they should have a Royal Commission to deal with the matter.

Mr F Burke, MLA, thought the Conference could carry the motion and still leave it to the Executive for action to be taken. He said that many members of the Party were acutely interested in the matter, and the names were being collected, and the Commissioner would be asked to put them back. If he refused, Cabinet would come to the Party to see what could be done. He had no hesitation in saying that if the Commissioner refused to obey the mandate of the people he would have to go. There was a clause in the Railway Act whereby he could be dealt with. They had told Johnson in 1910 that if he did not put the victimised tramway men back he would be sacked, and he lost no time in coming down off his high pedestal. They were not concerned with Fraser’s dignity, but they could make it plain that if he did not put the victimised 1917 men back he, too, would have to go.

A Newcastle delegate pointed out that the high officials who victimised the men were mostly over the age of 60, and it was up to the Government to dismiss them. He instanced several of the Cabinet should be instructed to take that action.

Messrs T Arthur and S Toombs both expressed the opinion that it should be referred to the incoming Executive.

The amendment was carried.
Discussion on Rule 27

A motion moved by Mr Bell, and seconded by Mr Kelly, that an organiser for the Party be secured and employed in country districts, was, after considerable discussion, turned down. Another motion, that Mr PJ Minahan be allowed to take his seat as a member of the Parliamentary Party, was referred to the incoming Executive for consideration.

There was a lengthy discussion on a motion to delete Section 4 of Rule 27, but it was defeated by a large majority. On the motion of Mr Bourke (Petersham) Section 3 of Rule 27 was amended to read: “And that 30 alternate delegates shall be elected in rotation from the runners-up in the list of candidates for election as Executive Committee.”

Mr Finn (Manly) moved that the office of General Secretary be held for three years. The Secretary was the principal officer of the organisation, and his position should be made as continuous as possible. The present condition of employment made him a mere casual, and wasn’t at all suitable. It was in the best interests of the Movement to grant some degree of permanency to a good man. Mr Martin seconded the motion, which was carried by 94 to 19 votes.

The annual balance-sheet and Executive report were carried without discussion.

Danger of Imperial Federation

Mr Catts, MHR, moved: “That this Conference, representing the ALP for the State of New South Wales, views with alarm the Imperial Federation emanating from various quarters from overseas.

“Especially are we concerned at the cabled reports that the Secretary of State for the Colonies proposes to receive a deputation from disgruntled legislators who are challenging legislature passed by the Parliament of Queensland, which in principle challenges Australia’s self-governing power. Any such interference may lead to widespread resentment and be followed by grave consequences.

“That the Premier of New South Wales forward this resolution to the Secretary for the Colonies, and on receiving a reply a copy be handed to the Secretary of the ALP for record purposes”.

He said the very fact that Lord Milner was receiving the delegation headed by Sir Robert Philp was in itself a direct challenge to the legislation of the Queensland Labor Government. The propertied interests had already appealed to the Courts, and the Privy Council had declared in favour of the Queensland Government, and that being so, Lord Milner should not have received the delegation. He stated that the moment he saw their self-governing rights interfered with he would resign from Parliament and go out hot-footed and organise for an Australian republic. The time had come for them to speak their minds on
these matters, and he for one wasn’t going to remain quiet when their self-governing rights were being challenged. He hoped that the Queensland Conference which was meeting at the end of the month would speak in no uncertain voice on the matter.

The motion was carried on the voices.

Mr Bell (Albury) moved: “New rule: That compulsory voting be introduced for both Federal and State elections, with compulsory enrolment for the State as well as the Federal”. The motion was carried.

An amended resolution providing that all members of affiliated unions or leagues 18 years of age or over shall have the right to vote in selection of candidates was carried.

**Regarding Apprentices**

Mrs Gray (Bathurst) moved – “That a Compulsory Apprenticeship Act be brought into being with the object of producing more skilled workers”. She said that what Australia wanted was skilled workers.

Mr Mills opposed the motion on the grounds that when there was an industrial dispute apprentices were called upon to do the “scabbing”. It wasn’t in the best interests of the unions to have that. He thought they should leave the matter to the unions for consideration, as they were best fitted to deal with a motion of that character.

Mr TJ Smith supported the motion. He wanted to see skilled trade education part of the curriculum for boys at schools. It was necessary in the life of a young country like Australia to have skilled men. He favoured legislation on the lines of the German system – an encouragement by bonus to parents to put their boys to some skilled trade so that their calling would fit them for the control of industry in the future.

Mr Campbell moved an amendment that the matter be adjourned with a view to referring it at some future Trade Union Conference. They should be careful in what they did lest they were assisting the boss with cheap labour.

Mr Sturgess (Vice-Chairman) supported the motion. He pointed out that the Nationalist Government last year wanted to do something along these lines, but the Employers’ Federation objected to it, and it was dropped. Thus it was up to them to support the measure. The whole system of apprenticeship should be considered. The smartest brains of the community were being wasted because there was no proper Apprentice Act.

Mr Magrath (Printing Trades) opposed the motion, claiming that it would give the employers an overplus of labour to be used in case of a strike. It was rather a matter for the unions to deal with.

Mr O’Dea also opposed the motion.

The amendment proposed by Mr Campbell was carried.
**Holman Government Appointments**

A motion providing for adult suffrage in municipal and shire council elections was carried on the voices without debate. It was decided to recommend to the Federal Executive: “That employees have representation on all boards of management in Government departments”. It was already on the State platform, and should be included in the Federal platform.

Mrs Fowler moved: “That all appointments made to the Public Service during the term of the Holman-Fuller Government be reviewed if a Labor Government is returned, and where it is found positions have been secured by political patronage or by unfair methods the appointments be cancelled”. The motion was carried, and Conference adjourned until Monday (June 14).

**Days 8 & 9, Monday & Tuesday, 14 & 15 June 1920**

**Concluding Session**

When Conference met on Monday evening (June 14) there were not sufficient delegates present to form a quorum, and the session was abandoned. On the following evening there were a mere handful of delegates present when the President opened the session, though it increased in numbers as the evening wore on. But at no time was there the statutory majority necessary to make alterations in the policy, and whatever motions were carried had little more effect than pious resolutions.

Mr Keniry moved: “That the Government take over the control of all banking and insurance business”. Mr N McPhee took the point that there were not a hundred delegates present, and the matter could not be discussed. However, a motion was carried, though it was without effect.

Mr Finucane moved: “That a principle of the Australian Labor Party be compulsory preference to unionists”. Mr Donovan seconded. Mr Magrath pointed out that the matter was already part of the policy. The President ruled the motion out of order.

Mr Finucane moved – “That all secretaries and organisers of unions be appointed as honorary inspectors under the Industrial Arbitration Act”. This was seconded by Mr O’Dea, who drew attention to the incompetency of some of the inspectors at the present time.

**Arbitration or Direct Action**

Mr Magrath wanted to see an amendment providing for inspectors as laid down under the Commonwealth and Queensland State Arbitration
Acts. He claimed that a motion framed on those lines, if placed before Parliament, would have more success than the motion outlined by Mr Finucane.

Mr Lazzarini favoured the motion. He thought there should be expert inspectors for the various classes of shops. In many cases that was not so today. He also touched on the matter of arbitration generally. He said the workers would have to decide in the near future whether they would have arbitration or not. They either had to accept it and be prepared to give it a fair trial or throw it overboard and get what they wanted by direct action. They could not use it up to a certain point and then reject it, and at the same time expect the employer to stand by it all the time.

The motion was carried, though the President announced that it could have no force owing to the insufficiency of delegates.

Several motions were moved that the Conference adjourn *sine die*, but they were defeated.

*The High Rent Evil*

Mr Keniry moved – “That legislation be enacted to provide that landlords, agents, or other persons engaged in the selling, leasing or renting of houses, or real estate be registered and licensed, and that the receiving or accepting of a bonus commission, emolument, or payment of any kind other than the fixed legal charge be treated as an offence punishable by disqualification and fine”. The motion was carried.

A lengthy discussion took place on a motion moved by Mr Huckle (Broken Hill), and seconded by Mr McMahon, as follows: “That houses of ill-fame and houses of accommodation be licensed, and that prostitutes be registered and medically examined at least once in each and every week”. After a number of delegates had spoken, the motion was defeated.

At 9.40 pm a motion was moved that the Conference adjourn *sine die*, and this was carried by an overwhelming vote. A few remarks by the President, in which he thanked delegates for their help and attention, and a motion of thanks to the President by delegates concluded the business of Conference.
There is a sense of *déjà vu* in this account of the 1921 Conference, in that the dominant division within the party was once again between the State Executive representing the extra-parliamentary sections of the party and the MPs, especially Premier Storey and his successor, Premier Dooley. An attempt by the Executive to assert its right to direct Caucus on parliamentary issues (including, once more, appointments to the Upper House) resulted in tough negotiations between Executive and Caucus, with a points victory to Caucus. This was documented in the Executive Report and discussed again on the floor of Conference. This was only the beginning of that particular battle, since in the following year, after the defeat of Labor in the 1922 NSW election, the Executive expelled the leader of the parliamentary party, James Dooley, setting off a period of intensified factional chaos.

As in previous years the correspondent for the *Australian Worker* presented his material in a fairly disorganised way, although there is a preference for telescoping debate on a similar theme even if it extended over various days. It is possible to get a strict chronological account by comparing it with the day-by-day reports in the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which are otherwise much briefer. In this instance I have preferred to indicate the day of debate when there is a clear break in the account, and divide the text according to the separate reports in successive editions of the *Australian Worker*.

Each year, preparations for Conference involved the publication of a business paper detailing the matters set for discussion. Unfortunately many of these have not survived. In 1921, however, a summary of the 274 motions presented by branches and unions was published months in advance of Conference in the *Australian Worker* (6 January 1921).

Although the AWU still controlled the State Executive and the business of Conference, factional division was obvious. In the election of
a new Executive Jack Bailey’s AWU ticket of was opposed by a ticket promoted by JH Catts, the Federal MP for Cook who was associated with the Railways Federation. Catts claimed on the floor of Conference that: “Of the Executive elected, 14 were from his ticket, 12 from the Bailey ticket, and 4 who were on both tickets”. Catts was a bitter enemy of Bailey and the AWU. His denial that his was a ‘Government’ ticket was not convincing (nor was Bailey’s denial that he had a ticket at all), although Catts was more anti-AWU than a supporter of Storey and Dooley. He would be expelled from the party in 1923 for publicly criticising AWU corruption.

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Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1920

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales,
Annual Report, 1920

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Thirtieth Annual Report and Balance-Sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is herewith submitted for your consideration.

Like the Annual Conference of 1919, that of 1920 did not assemble until June, the postponement being caused on account of the State elections being held on March 20th, and to enable the whole efforts of the Movement to be concentrated on securing victory for the Labor Party at the polls.

New Branches and Unions

During the year new Branches have been formed at the following centres

Kempsey          Goulburn          Millthorpe
Bexley           Mosman           Stockton
Caswell          Greenthorpe      Byron Bay
Griffith         Gundurimba       Springwood
Holbrook         Liverpool         Beechwood
Illabo           Lewisham         Blackheath
Moama            Glenreagh        Six-Mile Camp
Albert           Brighton-le-Sands Bugaldi District
Cessnock         Rooty Hill       Armidale
The strength of the organisation has been further increased by the addition during the year of the following unions, which have affiliated in accordance with the rules:

- Tanners and Leather Dressers
- Australian Postal Electricians
- Shop Assistants – Newcastle Branch
- Undertakers and Cemetery Employees
- Caterers’ Waitresses
- Australian Progressive Carpenters
- Painters

**Executive Meetings**

During the year Executive meetings have been held, attendances being as follows:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<td>Andrews, J</td>
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<td>Carey, W</td>
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**The State Elections**

The State elections were dealt with in an interim report submitted to last Annual Conference. The Labor Government took office with a following of 42; and although there have been changes in the personnel of the
House the number of supporters of the Government remains unaltered. The changes were due to the appointment of Messrs Beeby and James to Judgeships, and the deaths of Messrs Fingleton and Briner. It will be remembered that no provision was made for filling such vacancies in the new Electoral Act under which the elections had been conducted. Much discussion took place as to whether the candidates (irrespective of party) next highest on the ballot should be appointed to the vacancies, or whether the seats should be allotted to the next highest candidates of the same Party to which the retiring candidates belonged. Finally the latter method of filling the vacancies was adopted.

Death of Mr James Fingleton, MLA

On October 15th last the Party suffered a loss by the death of Mr James Fingleton, MLA for Eastern Suburbs. The sad news was received with deep regret throughout the Movement, to the advancement of which Jim Fingleton had dedicated his life. The Government accorded their late colleague a State funeral, and a large gathering of Labor supporters attended to pay their last respects.

Eastern Suburbs Vacancy

The vacancy caused by the death of Mr Fingleton was filled by Mr Frank Dwyer, another old and tried Labor stalwart, whose succession to the seat was a well-earned reward for long years of unselfish devotion to the cause of the workers.

Labor Legislation

During the Storey Government’s first session, 44 Acts of Parliament were placed on the Statute Book. Among these was the Anti-Profiteering Act, which, though robbed of many of its best features in the Legislative Council, has already had a perceptible effect in reducing the cost of living. Other important measures were also emasculated in the Upper House, in which Labor unfortunately has only three pledged representatives.

Keen disappointment was felt in Labor circles at the delay in bringing forward the Motherhood Endowment Bill, which was postponed until next session. The announcement that Mr Storey would leave for England to deal with certain financial matters, and that Parliament would not sit during the period of his absence was the subject of strong criticism by the Executive and the Branches generally, who were anxious for the early re-assembly of Parliament in order that effect should be given to the Motherhood Endowment proposals and Labor’s policy generally.

Special Executive Meeting

A number of special meetings of the Executive, at which the State Parliamentarians were asked to attend, were called to deal with the
matter. An official report of proceedings was issued to the daily Press, but the capitalist organs published it in a mutilated form under misleading headings, apparently designed to misrepresent the attitude of the Executive. Consequently, only the readers of The Labor News had any opportunity of knowing the exact position at the close of the conferences. The official report read as follows:

**ALP Official Statement**

The New South Wales Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, after conference with the Premier and some 20 members of the State Labor Party on the 13th and 14th instant, and the fullest consideration, with one dissentient carried the following resolution:

“That this meeting of the Executive, after hearing Mr Storey, still adheres to its former decisions, and registers its inflexible determination in insisting that Parliament reassemble not later than March, 1921, to give effect to Labor’s policy; and, further, that the necessary appointments be made to the Legislative Council forthwith, in order to secure the passage of Labor measures sent up from the Assembly.”

This resolution was forwarded to the State Labor Party, who considered the matter on the 18th and 20th instant. The Party did not come to any decision, but adjourned the matter for further consideration to the Central Executive, which met again on the 20th and 21st instant. Messrs Dooley, Lang, Cann, McGirr, Bailey and O’Brien, having been deputed to act for the Party, submitted their point of view. Mr Loughlin also took part in the deliberations, whilst Messrs McTiernan and Kavanagh and other members of the Party were present. Finally the following additional resolution was carried unanimously:

“That whilst this Executive has no power to open Parliament or carry on the work of Parliament, it has both the right and the duty to inform the State Parliamentary Party what the Movement expects of it, and, having done so, the responsibility rests upon the Parliamentary Labor Party to recognise its obligations.”

The Organisation exists to carry out the objective, platform, and policy of the Annual Conference. The Executive is empowered to act on behalf of the Labor Movement between its Annual Conferences, and it cannot accept a quiescent or neutral position in the face of great social injustice, but must continuously fight until it carries out its public pledges – first by obtaining a majority in Parliament, and then insisting upon that majority carrying out the pledges upon which it was elected.

The financial situation was carefully considered throughout the whole of these conferences and consultations, and the opinion was general that the resources of New South Wales are equal to its developmental requirements, as well as to meet the obligations of current services.
We regard the disturbed condition of affairs with the utmost concern, demanding the closest possible attention of the Government.

We cannot think that the State Labor Party will, in face of the practically unanimous voice of the organisation of Labor throughout New South Wales, postpone the opening of Parliament beyond March, in order that pressing policy matters may be proceeded with, nor fail to make such arrangements as would permit of Parliament meeting earlier should some special emergency arise.

There is a transparent effort on the part of the daily Press to create mischief and friction in Labor ranks; but we feel sure that there is sufficient level-headedness and commonsense in the State Labor Party, the members of the Movement, and the general public, to draw their own proper deductions concerning the real facts of the case.

(Signed) WH Lambert, President
W Carey, General Secretary.
Macdonell House, Sydney, 21/1/21

**Labor's Lord Mayor**

In December, the Mayoral election resulted in the appointment of Alderman WH Lambert, who has occupied the position of President of this Movement continuously since 1917. Despite the malignancy of the capitalist Press, congratulations to Mr Lambert poured in from all parts of the State. Mr Lambert has proved a splendid chairman at Labor gatherings, and his firm adherence to Labor ideals makes his appointment to the high position of Chief Magistrate of the City a particularly good one from Labor's point of view.

**Finances**

The year 1920 opened with the finances of the Executive in a very straitened condition, with liabilities amounting to over £1,200 and a balance at the bank of £17/15/1; but, notwithstanding the fact that we conducted an election in the State in March last, we succeeded in reducing the total indebtedness by over £500. During the year we appealed to Branches for financial assistance, and although the response was not all that we had hoped, quite a number of Branches – particularly in the country districts – came forward with liberal donations.

We also conducted a raffle for a £20 note, which proved most successful; and by this and other means we succeeded in raising sufficient funds to pay the salaries of the staff for the period under review, as well as reducing the indebtedness as stated above.

During the current year we hope to raise, from carnivals and other sources, sufficient funds to establish a substantial credit balance; and there is little doubt that if the present Federal and State Governments run
out their full terms, our organisation will be well prepared, financially and otherwise, for the strain of the next election campaign.

**ALP Art Union**

Arrangements were made and permission obtained from the Attorney-General to run an Art Union for the purpose of establishing a library at Head Office, which we anticipate will prove very successful and assist in filling a want which has been growing more urgent as the Movement expands. We hope in the near future to have a library of economic and general educational value to the younger members of the Movement.

In the conduct of the Art Union, we were fortunate in obtaining the experienced assistance of ex-Senator McDougall, for many years Secretary of the Eight-Hour Movement. With no other help the venture was handled, under the personal direction of the Secretary, by our ordinary staff. A heavy additional burden of work was also placed on the Assistant Secretary (Mr W Gibbs), who was Receiver-General for the stream of shillings which flowed in from all parts of the State.

**The Labor News**

During the year *The Labor News* has increased in popularity and has exercised a splendid influence in galvanising the activities of the branches. The continued high cost of paper has made the task of establishing the journal on a sound financial footing a difficult one. *The Labor News*, however, has been for some time meeting all its liabilities from its own advertising and sales revenue. Mr Higgins states that it would be impossible, at the present high cost of production, to print, without loss, a larger paper, and continue to sell at one penny. As a matter of fact, every copy of *The Labor News* costs over a penny for printing alone, and, in the circumstance, it is a matter for congratulation that we have the services of an official organ, successfully running along without subsidy from the Organisation.

**In Conclusion**

The General Secretary desires to thank the President and Executive members for their unfailing courtesy and immediate attention given to all matters referred to them. A big and important business sheet has been placed before every meeting of the Executive, of which a record number has been held. The sincere regard of the members for the best interests of the Movement has resulted in a harmony of discussion which has greatly facilitated the consideration of the numberless matters submitted during the year for the Executive’s decision.

WM Carey, General Secretary.
Report of Federal Labor Party

Mr W Carey,
General Secretary, ALP
Sydney.

Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 10th instant asking for a report of the operations of the Commonwealth Labor Party.

Since the elections of 1919 the Party has had a very strenuous time, the House having sat continuously for nine months. During this time much legislation was introduced, very little of which is of use to the workers of Australia. Unceasing vigilance had to be maintained by the Party because of the trend of the legislation introduced. The Party returned from the hustings with 26 members out of a House of 75, and since then WG Higgs (Capricornia) has been expelled from the Party, and MP Considine (Barrier) has resigned, while Hugh Mahon was defeated for Kalgoorlie after expulsion from the House for alleged sedition. During the period, however, we regained Ballarat. After an appeal, the election of 1919 was upset, and DC McGrath was returned at the by-election. The Party now stands at 24 members in the House of Representatives, while Senator “Jupp” Gardiner stands a lone figure on the Labor benches in the Senate. The state of parties in the Senate is an example of the unscrupulous tactics used by the Nationalists in their electoral legislation. So glaring is it in its dishonesty that there have been even objections from the Nationalist Party itself.

In 1917 the Nationalists started agitation to kill the Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and for over three years have continued the agitation. Bitter attacks were made on the President (Judge Higgins), and while the Court was congested the Nationalist Government refused to appoint sufficient Judges to cope with the work. Consequently many organisations have had to wait for periods up to 12 months. These tactics have practically killed the Act and the Court, and have resulted in the resignation of the President of the Court (Mr Justice Higgins). This is a distinct loss to the community. With circumscribed jurisdiction, he has achieved more than any other industrial Judge in Australia.

Apparently the Nationalists, working under instructions from the employers’ organisations, have decided to make the Arbitration Act subordinate to the Industrial Peace Act. Whether the latter will be of use to the workers is highly problematical. With Nationalist administration it is hardly likely to be of much benefit to the workers.

During the election campaign the Nationalists, among many other things, promised that a Commission should be appointed to inquire into the cost of living, and to lay down a basic wage; also that whatever the finding was would be adhered to by the Government. After twelve
months’ sittings the Commission arrived at a basic wage for each State; but the Government refuses, notwithstanding the agitation of the Labor Party, to bring the wages recommended into operation.

Another promise not carried out was an election of delegates to a Constitution Alteration Convention. The Constitution of Australia is obviously inadequate, and an alteration is urgently necessary. This matter has now been shelved indefinitely.

During the session the Party has labored continuously in trying to get an amendment of the Old Age and Invalid Pensions Act, to provide for an allowance of £1 per week to the pensioners, and also secure a more liberal interpretation of the Act, with the exception of a concession to the blind pensioners, which allows of a greater earning capacity, without deduction of pension. The Party will continue to agitate for greater recognition of the services to Australia of the pensioners.

The War Precautions Act has at last been repealed; but, unfortunately the worst features have been re-enacted in a series of Acts - namely Passports Act, Immigration Act, Alien Registrations Act, Unlawful Assemblies Act, and Nationality Act. All of these Acts are of an Imperial character, inasmuch as most or all of the provisions of these Acts have been passed by the Parliaments of South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and England. There appears to be no doubt that Australia and other British Dominions have been working under instructions from Downing Street with regard to this particular series of Acts.

The past session has been remarkable for two Acts which impose great liability and responsibility upon Australia. These are the Nauru Agreement and the Anglo-Persian Oil Agreement. The former has cost Australia approximately a million and a half, as a partner with New Zealand and Great Britain in the purchase of the phosphate deposits of Nauru. The inner history of this deal would be very interesting reading. With regard to the latter Act, the people of Australia have been placed at the mercy of this powerful company. Not only has this company been handed a monopoly of oil in Australia, but it has been given charge of the development of the oilfields of Papua. Until sufficient oil is procured from Papua, the Anglo-Persian Company will continue to supply the needs of Australia. There is a feeling that oil will never be discovered in payable quantities in Papua while the Anglo-Persian Company has oil to sell.

The Party has been largely responsible for the exposing of the scheme to sell the Commonwealth fleet of cargo-carriers. This line has been a constant source of annoyance to the capitalists of Australia and England, and every possible channel has been exploited in the endeavour to remove it from the Commonwealth. So far the Party has been successful in defeating the attempt.

Ever since the end of the war there has been a powerful military clique at work endeavouring to create a huge training scheme, ostensibly
for the purpose of self-defence, but really to perpetuate the military machine and caste, with all its pomp, ceremony, and fat billets. The work of the Labor Party against this scheme has resulted in the scheme being dropped for the present; but constant vigilance will be exercised by the Party to prevent this scandal.

The Party has moved several no-confidence motions, without success. While the third party – the Farmers’ – claim to be a separate and distinct party, the members of same can always be relied upon to save the Government. As a matter of fact, several of them are pledged to support the Government in any attack from the Labor Party. If there is any difference between the Nationalists and Farmers, it is that the latter are more conservative.

Yours fraternally,
Arthur Blakeley, Secretary, Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
January 1, 1921.

Secretary Municipal Party’s Report

Dear Sir,

In reply to your communication of the 20th ultimo requesting a report on the Labor administration in the City Council, I have the honor, on behalf of the Party, to select at random various items of interest to the Movement which we have been the means of bringing into force.

Although the Party has not had the time and opportunity at its disposal to effectively enforce its municipal manifesto, you will readily concede that we have made fair progress with the conditions of employment.

Amongst the most important matters under consideration at the present time are the acquisition of a metal quarry and a coal mine, the latter proposal having received our close attention during the past twelve months without being brought to a successful issue – due to the fact that the properties recommended by our experts finally proved to be of no value for power-house purposes. We are again considering new proposals, and, with the experience already gained, are hopeful that in the near future we may be in a position to acquire a suitable municipal coal mine, thus saving the public the enormous profits paid annually to the Coal Vend, and ensuring the production of electric current under the most economic conditions.

With the limited scope at our disposal, under an obsolete Corporation Act, progress must necessarily be slow. However, with the assistance of the Parliamentary Labor Party in regard to amending the Corporation Act complained of, your representatives in the City Council will not hesitate to enforce the municipal platform of the Party.

The items mentioned above are as follows:
While the Board of Trade was deliberating in the matter of the first basic wage declaration, all employees of the Council were granted an increase of 10/- per week.

Subsequently, on the declaration of the basic wage, the minimum wage was increased by 11/6 per week to all adult male employees, 6/- per week to female employees, and 5/- per week to youths.

When the second declaration was made, the Council passed the increase of 8/- per week to all adult male employees, preserving the difference heretofore existing between the minimum wage in the Council’s service and that as laid down by the Board of Trade.

(These increases were carried despite the bitter opposition of the members of the Civic Reform Party.)

Gangers in the Electricity Department who, owing to lack of extension work, could not be employed as gangers but were reduced to the grade of laborers, to be paid an extra 1/- per day as a retaining fee to ensure their service as gangers when required.

Pay to men unloading coal at the power-house increased by 2d per ton, with an addition of 6d per truck during the overtime work.

Consideration of pay and conditions of labor for cold-storage employees.

Sick pay granted to carters providing their own horses at half regular wage payable to carters for a period of one month and afterwards at ordinary sick-pay allowance.

All officers and employees placed on uniform basis as to concessions, accident pay, overtime pay, public holidays, annual leave, and compassionate and retiring allowances.

Compassionate allowances granted in respect of employees who may die prior to completion of five years’ service.

Proportionate long-service leave granted to employees – three months after ten years’ service, and proportional for each additional year, without a limit.

Preference to unionists amplified by providing that financial unionists to whom preference is given shall continue to be financial unionists during continuance of service with the Council.

Ash Fillers at Power-house. - Shifts reduced to six hours, and men who worked beyond six hours after the date agreed upon (three months previously) to be paid at overtime rates.

Increments granted to block boys and messengers in Council’s service.

Bricklayers at power-house additions to work 44 hours, at 2/6 per hour.

All bricklayers temporarily employed given same pay and conditions granted to bricklayers employed temporarily at power-house.

Subsequently all bricklayers in Council’s service placed on uniform footing as regards pay and working conditions.
Adoption of 44-hour week referred to Finance Committee for consideration, and subsequently a 44-hour week established, with no Saturday work, and without any corresponding reduction in pay.

Employees absent through pneumatic influenza granted full pay.

Installation inspectors, Electricity Department, insured from risk from pneumatic influenza.

City Health Officer and sanitary inspectors insured for £500 each in connection with outbreak of pneumatic influenza.

Payment granted to officers of Sanitary Department who worked on Saturday, Sunday, or Easter holidays during influenza epidemic.

It was arranged that employees issued with oilskins, where specially recommended by the head of the Department, to have mackintoshes issued.

It was also arranged that a waterproof outfit be issued to motor cyclists employed by the Council.

It was arranged that in connection with holidays granted during Easter to employees, equivalent time-off to be allowed to employees who were required to work during that period.

It was also arranged that full salary or wages be paid to employees for public holidays during the peace celebrations, and an extra shift rate for those required to work on those days.

All employees granted similar concessions for sick pay, leave, overtime, holiday leave, etc.

Overalls to be supplied to engine drivers, greasers, boiler-cleaners, etc. at the power house.

Reward to employees for suggestions to be granted for employees receiving no more than £312 per annum instead of £225 as heretofore.

Journeymen who have completed apprenticeship with the Electricity Department and take outside employment to widen their experience, if they apply within three years they are to be reinstated and credited with full service given.

Delegation appointed to consider the amalgamation of Paddington with the City. Matter referred to a Special Committee for consideration and report.

Representatives appointed to confer with representatives of Randwick re absorption of Randwick into the City.

Representations made to the Chief Secretary to grant the Council direct representation on the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Superannuation Fund for employees again brought under notice, and the Premier asked to have necessary legislation initiated.

Fire Insurance Fund for Council’s properties established.

Prompt returns to fishermen from the Markets assured by the opening of a Consignors’ Advance Account, so that cash may be wired immediately after the sale.
Deputation arranged to wait upon Chief Secretary re old Woolloomooloo Fish Market site.

Allocation of barrowmen’s stands for sale of fruit. Conference with Superintendent of Traffic, and approval of scheme obtained.

Approval given to allocation of stands for sale of fish, etc. in City streets.

Acceptance of all excess offered in connection with loan of £850,000 approved.

Scheme for workmen’s dwellings initiated.

Representations to be made to Chief Secretary regarding provision of bathrooms, etc., in dwelling-houses; also in regard to the control of size of rooms, etc. in City buildings.

Representations made with regard to the rating of property of Railway Commissioners, Board of Water Supply and Sewerage, and Federal Government.

Provision made for fitting-up of small plant to manufacture Council’s own disinfectant at termination of present contract.

It was decided to proceed with the purchase of a road-metal quarry.

Acquisition of a coal-bearing property further considered, and a sub-committee appointed to go into the matter.

Use of enclosed portion of Hyde Park for purpose of recreation advocated, and deputation to wait upon Railway Commissioners.

Approval given to several additional matters being included in the Amended Corporation Bill.

Band performances in City parks to be given by Professional Musicians’ Band.

Yours fraternally,

W Holdsworth

Hon. Secretary, Municipal Labor Party February 4th, 1921
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1921

(The Australian Worker, 31 March, 7, 14 April 1921)

Day 1, Saturday, 26 March 1921

NSW Labor Conference. Addresses by President and Acting Premier. Conference Declares for Proportional Representation.

Whilst the big issues involved make the ALP Conference now sitting in Sydney one of the most momentous in the history of the Movement, so the tactics of two almost evenly balanced factions bid fair to make it one of the most exciting. Features of the proceedings so far have been addresses by President Lambert and Acting Premier Dooley, and the decision of Conference in favour of retaining proportional representation.

An unusually large number of delegates were present when President WH Lambert officially declared the annual Labor Conference open last Saturday afternoon, at the Trades Hall, Sydney. The attendance at the opening was set down at 2.50, but later on there must have been just on 300 delegates from all parts of the State in the Conference hall.

Mr C Last was appointed minute secretary, and Messrs Vernon and Whittaker filled the positions of timekeepers.

Mr A Vernon moved that the press be admitted, while Mr T Arthur moved, as an amendment, that only the Labor press be allowed to attend and report Conference. After a short debate, the amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority. It was decided, on the motion of Mr J Power, that the President, minute secretary, and general secretary constitute a press committee to supply the press at the end of each session with an official report of the proceedings.

A motion to admit the public was defeated.

Conference carried a motion congratulating the President on his elevation to the position of Lord Mayor of Sydney. Delegates said that it augured well for the Labor Movement when one of its members could be lifted from comparative obscurity and placed in the position of chief magistrate of the city of Sydney.

The President (Mr Lambert), in reply, said he appreciated the kind remarks of delegates. Personally he felt proud of the position of Lord Mayor, but his main gratification lay in the fact that, as Lord Mayor, he would have the opportunity of doing a little more for the working class than he would have had were he not occupying that position. His main object, while in the position, would be to endeavour to carry out Labor’s principles in the municipal life of the city. He suggested that radical
alterations be made in the present Act governing the Council to give it greater power to do more for the workers than could be done at present.

**The Late Mr Brookfield**

Mr CC Lazzarini, MLA, moved – “That this Conference records its deepest sympathy at the tragic death of the late Percy Brookfield, MLA”. He suggested that the motion, when carried, be forwarded to the friends and supporters of Mr Brookfield through the AMA Broken Hill. Mr Lazzarini spoke feelingly of his associations with Mr Brookfield, and said the workers of Australia had lost a sterling champion, and Australia had lost a man.

Mr R Stuart-Robertson, MLA, seconded the motion, and said he never knew Mr Brookfield to tell a lie or do a mean or dirty act. If Brookfield said he would do anything, he did it. He was first, last, and always a man of his word, and Australia had lost one of its best men while the working-class Movement had lost one of the best fighters that ever stood on the floor of Parliament House.

Mr WH Hutchinson also feelingly supported the motion.

Mr McTiernan, MLA (Attorney-General) extended the sympathy of the Labor Government. No man gave the Government more loyal support than did Mr Brookfield. Up till a few weeks ago the daily press had reviled Brookfield, and could not say enough against him, even to suggest his deportation from the country. Today they were slobbering over his memory. It was tragic that Brookfield should have had to pay such a penalty to vindicate his character in the capitalistic press of this country.

The motion was carried, delegates standing in their seats for several minutes.

**Secret Meetings Condemned**

Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) moved – “That this Conference condemns the action of Mr JH Catts, MHR, in holding secret meetings with a view to influencing the options and minds of delegates prior to the opening of Conference”. He said that country delegates came to Sydney with open minds, and he deprecated that efforts should have been made to influence them. He thought that Mr Catts should have refused to have been a party to such a procedure, and that when the matter was first mentioned in the capitalist press he should have repudiated it. Such actions only tended to disrupt the Movement and cause disaffection amongst delegates.

The President ruled the motion out of order, on the grounds that the Conference was not properly constituted.
Messrs Rowlands, Tyrrell, and Gibbs were elected to constitute the Credentials Committee. Messrs V Kavanagh, R Bramston, TJ Smith, H Campbell and Mrs Kirwin were elected to form an Agenda Committee.

Mr J Coates (Ashfield) moved that, in order to do honour to the memory of the late EW O’Sullivan, Conference should instruct the Government to name the clock tower at the Central Railway Station, Sydney, the “O’Sullivan Tower”, and also place a bronze bust of Mr O’Sullivan in the main Assembly Hall, bearing O’Sullivan’s words, “Nothing is too good for Australia”.

The motion was seconded by Alderman J Farrell, and carried.

**Acting-Premier at the Conference**

Mr Dooley (Acting-Premier) arrived at the Conference at 4.45 pm, and was received with acclamation. He was officially welcomed by the President. In thanking Conference for the reception, Mr Dooley said he would address Conference later on in the day.

With Mr Dooley on the platform were Messrs G Cann (Minister for Labor), J Estell (Minister for Railways), AE McTiernan (Attorney-General), R Sproule (Solicitor-General) and members of the New South Wales Labor Party. Several Federal Labor members were also present.

The standing orders were adopted without alteration, and Conference adjourned at 5 pm.

**President Lambert’s Address**

When Conference resumed on Saturday night the President delivered his presidential address. After expressing gratification at the large attendance of delegates, he said:

From a general survey of the position, it seems obvious that despite the continuous and hostile and false criticism of the capitalistic press, the Movement has more than held its own in every way during the past twelve months, and particularly on the lines of solidification of the organisation.

Very many new branches have been formed, and many more unions have affiliated. Fortunately for the country the people returned a Labor Government to power at the last elections twelve months back. The Government majority, however, is a very slender one, and it is therefore handicapped to a great extent in many ways, but even so it has done a good deal of good work by way of administration and legislation.

**The Upper House**

The Government is working at a great disadvantage as regards the Upper House, where there are only two pledged Labor men out of
seventy members. Practically every measure passed by the Government has been amended or emasculated to such an extent as to very largely destroy its purpose and effectiveness.

The last Conference requested the Government to swamp the Upper House, but so far through some reason no steps have been taken in this direction, and although we have the Government in power their efforts to carry Labor’s policy out is to a great extent neutralised by the Legislative Council. The Council as at present constituted only represents the employers and the capitalists.

Re-Registration of Unions and Victimisation Matters

The Government was requested by last Conference, and also pledged itself to re-register the whole of the unions deregistered, and reinstate all workers victimised during the 1917 strike. It has gone a long way in those lines and re-registered many of the unions in question, and reinstated many hundreds of the victimised workers.

There have been complaints, however, from some unions and unionists concerned that the Government has not yet gone as far as desired in those matters, but the position in this regard will no doubt be dealt with by the Government as Conference proceeds.

The Electoral System

Since the resolution of the last Conference to go back to the single electorate system from the present system, much consideration appears to have been given to the matter by the State Parliamentary Party, and members of the Movement generally. Up to the present, circumstances seem to have prevented a satisfactory amending bill being put through. It is now the opinion of a large majority of the members of the Party and many others who have studied the matter that the principles of the present system should stand with proper modifications and simplifications.

The Conference may do well to reconsider the question, as it is of vital importance to the Movement, more particularly so in view [of the decision] of the recent Nationalists’ political annual conference, presided over by Mr Holman, to revert to the single electorates. Personally, I am of the opinion – though I have not expressed it before – that on account of the amount of time that would be required for redistribution, and the extent to which our present organisation may be disturbed, it would be better to retain the present system amended on proper lines.
**Bursting Up Land Monopoly**

New South Wales has an area of 195,669,000 acres, and the major portion of this huge territory is in the possession, under different tenures, of land and finance companies, the members of which are living overseas, and very seldom see the country from which their wealth is produced.

The compulsory subdivision of these large estates is an imperative necessity if we are going to become a prosperous nation in the Southern Pacific. Until we have successful land settlement in this country immigration is unthinkable.

The capitalist is promulgating the pernicious doctrine of unrestricted immigration, notwithstanding the fact that we have thousands of unemployed with us today, and they further insist that the only remedy for the absorption into industry is a wholesale reduction of wages, but Labor must insist on a high standard of living at all costs. The exploiters’ profits should be reduced instead of the workers’ wages.

It is a sad commentary, and a standing disgrace, that Australia should be confronted with a huge army of unemployed people, and this at a time when the capitalist says we must have more production. If the captains of industry require more production, then put on more producers, thus providing employment for those in need of it.

The Government has introduced a land subdivision bill that should have a good effect by way of releasing the monopolised land for settlement once it is passed through Parliament.

**Unemployment**

The solution of the unemployed difficulty lies in a bold and vigorous public works policy, and the money for carrying out highly necessary developmental works could be raised within the State. In 1920 our primary industries produced £100,000,000, and to say that with this huge production that money cannot be raised within the State is to assert that which is palpably untrue.

There seems to be a concerted attempt on the part of employers to throw all the men they can out of employment with a view of breaking down the standard of wages and conditions. There is more unemployment in all other States of Australia, excepting Queensland, than in New South Wales. Similar conditions exist all over the world, and have been brought about by circumstances over which the Government have had no control, and while a great deal has been done to relieve the position by providing work and relief, it is necessary for some other comprehensive action to be taken to overcome the problem.
The Government and the Executive

There has been a great deal of misrepresentation and false criticism directed against the Executive and the Parliamentary Party, and also the Municipal Labor Party, by the capitalistic press. Practically the whole of their statements and allegations were absolutely untrue, and their object for this was, and is, to try and shake the confidence of the people in the Executive and members of the Labor Party. It is a form of propaganda used for many years to defeat Labor and place representatives of the capitalists in power. While the Executive has its duty to perform on behalf of the Movement, it at all times was prepared to, and did give, the members of the Party a square deal despite what appeared in the press.

Imperial Federation

There is an underhand and secret move on the part of the Nationalists and so-called Progressive politicians and capitalists and enemies of Australia and its people to saddle the people of this country with a complete scheme of Imperialism and despotism. If this succeeds it will absolutely rob the people of their self-governing rights, and the country will then become a vassal State, and be used in the interests of English and foreign capitalists. I am of the opinion that all members of Parliament, State and Federal, and the whole Movement, should oppose this with all the resources in its power, and that a campaign of propaganda should be launched against it forthwith.

Press Attacks on President

There has been an avalanche of vindictive and spiteful abuse heaped upon me as your President right through the year by the Sydney press for carrying out and giving effect to the policy and principles of Labor. In addition, there seem to be dark and mysterious forces at work against the interests of the Movement, and with a view of its disorganisation. Notwithstanding the false propaganda and misrepresentation that is being carried on, I feel sure that the good sense of the delegates will prevail in this and all other matters that may arise, and that the interests of the Movement will be safeguarded.

I feel that I must, before concluding, say a word of praise as regards our General Secretary, Mr Carey. He has, to my personal knowledge, worked continuously and energetically in the interests of the Movement, and devoted the whole of his time and energy for that purpose. He has zealously and most efficiently carried out his duties as General Secretary, and to a very great extent as a result of this the Movement is now in a more progressive and solid position than ever before.
The President then referred to a circular which had been handed round to delegates by some person casting insinuations against his character and industrial record. As it was not signed he was not in a position to say who had been responsible for it, but luckily he was well able to disprove its contents.

Captain Toombs (Radio Telegraphists) formally moved the adoption of the President’s report.

Mr A Wheeler (Transport Workers) opposed the motion. He claimed that the Labor Government has not done as much for the unemployed as the Fuller Nationalist Government. (Dissent) What had the Labor Government done for the waterfront workers? Had it carried out the pledges made at the last general elections? He objected to people thrown out of work being forced to go to the Benevolent Society for food. That was simply degrading the workers.

The motion was carried on the voices.

**Acting Premier Addresses Conference**

Mr Dooley (Acting Premier) then addressed the Conference. He commenced by saying that he hoped and believed that delegates realised that they had met to transact important business. He expressed regret that the Premier (Mr Storey) was not present. He was away fulfilling an important mission for the Movement. Delegates would be pleased to hear that he had received an intimation from Mr Storey the other day that he hoped to be successful in that mission, which would enable the Labor Government to do something practical for the country.

This was a time when they had to realise what the future of the Labor Movement was going to be. The world was going through a period of evolution and delegates were charged with the very important mission of guiding the destinies of the Labor Movement in this country. He deprecated the action of Labor’s political enemies in raking up the sectarian issue. They were trying their best to disrupt the Labor Movement, and made no secret of the fact that they were working day and night to do so. Here was a big issue the Labor Movement had to fight. It was for them to say that Labor knew no creed or sect, but stood for the elevation of the masses, irrespective of what their religious beliefs might be. (Applause)

**Efforts to Disrupt Movement**

Sometimes he thought a serious attempt was being made to split the Movement from within. Sections outside tried all they knew how to accomplish this, and too often people inside the Movement fell victims to their schemes. He hoped the Movement would always keep itself above
such matters. Let them always remember that the only way to success was by working harmoniously and unselfishly.

The Labor Government had many critics, but he and other members of the Government welcomed criticism, provided it was constructive and fair criticism. Many had disputed his right to the position of Acting Premier. “I think,” said Mr Dooley, “my faithfulness, long service, and loyalty to this great Movement entitle me to the position until such time as somebody else, better fitted than myself, comes along. (Applause) Of course there are faults to be found with the Labor Government, but as Mr Boote (Editor of the *Worker*) once said: ‘Even a bad Labor Government is better than a good Tory Government’ “.

**Parliament Should be Supreme**

Mr Dooley referred to the work done by the Labor Government since it took office. It had to be remembered that the Government was hedged in by limitations which would have to be dealt with before they could hope to make real progress. He thought that Parliament elected by the people should be supreme. It was not right for commissions, such as the Railway Administration, for instance, to be able to run counter to the wishes of the people as expressed at the ballot box. But even if the Government was not able to do everything it desired, it was at least some advantage to have a Labor Government in charge of the administration. (Cheers)

Of the number of distinct promises made by Mr Storey in the policy speech at Mudgee – 80 in all – 33 had already been fulfilled (applause) and at least half of them had been tackled in some way. They had only to remember that to realise that the Labor Government had not remained idle. This had been done in twelve months, and if they did as well during the coming session they would be in the position of having carried out the entire policy before the close of the present Parliament.

**The 1917 Men**

Mr Dooley sketched, briefly, some of the many things done by the Labor Government since it had been in office. It had recalled Mr DR Hall from London, and no fair-minded person could be found who would complain of their action in thus abrogating what was an indecent act on the part of the Holman Government. They had fulfilled their pledge regarding the IWW men. As to the 1917 strikers, the matter was not yet finalised, but he could say, on behalf of the Government and Party, that that promise would be carried out both in the spirit and the letter. The last Conference had asked for a Royal Commission to inquire into the circumstances of the 1917 strike. The Commission was now sitting, and would shortly furnish its report. He did not wish to make any threat beyond saying that they were the Government and would see that the
wishes of the people were carried out. In the meantime hundreds of victimised men had been reinstated.

The Waterside Workers

All the unions deregistered by the Holman Government had been reregistered. (Cheers) He could now tell them that they were throwing the scabs out of the Model Lodging House. (Cheers) While they had no control over the overseas shipping companies, at least they were taking steps to deny them the use of State property for scabs. The Coal Lumpers’ Hall had been returned to that union, and in order to prevent the Coal Lumpers being further victimised they were giving them a ten-year lease of the property. (Cheers)

The Unemployment Problem

The financial position of the country at the time of the last general elections was such that it made them very reluctant as to whether they should take office. But they believed there were many wrongs to be righted and they tackled the job. (Cheers) There was a huge unemployment problem – the worst the country had seen since the beginning of responsible Government. But they were gradually overcoming this mighty problem.

Something would have to be done in the way of unemployment insurance. They were considering the various Acts in other countries dealing with this matter, and next session they hoped to introduce the best unemployment insurance scheme possible. The Government recognised that every man had the right to work, and certainly had no right to be starved. The Labor Government would see to it that no man, woman, or child starved.

Immigration and Wages

The Government believed in immigration, provided that the country was in a position to absorb immigration. But the Government would be no party to bringing immigrants to the country to swell the ranks of the unemployed, or take the jobs of men already here. It had already made its views regarding immigration known to the Federal Government.

Referring to the attempt being made in certain quarters to reduce wages, Mr Dooley said the Government had made up its mind to fight tooth and nail for the cost of living to come down first. It would fight to the death any attempt on the part of employers to lower the standard of living to the Australian worker. Mr Dooley concluded by stating that the Labor Government had passed 44 Acts of Parliament, which was a record
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for the 12 months. He contended that the Government had amply justi-
fied itself under the most trying circumstances. (Applause)

The Upper House

Mr J Power (AWU) said that while the Government had done many
things for which it had to be congratulated, he was surprised that
nothing had been done with the Upper House. It was time that some-
thing was done to deal with that bulwark against liberty and democracy.
Until something of a desperate nature was done the Government would
find itself hampered at every turn. He objected to Mr Dooley’s statement
about conferring with somebody 16,000 miles away as to what they
should do regarding the Upper House.

Mr Dooley: Isn’t it advisable to get all the information we can?
Mr Power: I fail to see how you can get any good advice from the
Lloyd George Government on this question. (Loud cheers) My
commonsense tells me that the Imperialist Government won’t give any
good advice to the people of New South Wales. If anything is to be done,
the people of this country will have to take action of their own. I am
certain that the people are prepared to stand behind the Government, if it
will only have the courage to tackle this problem as it should be tackled.
(Cheers) He thought the time was ripe for the Government to do
something radical. The people were entitled to full self-government.
While it was true that they could put members in the Upper House that
wasn’t the way to solve the problem. Let the Government get a
declaration from the people to abolish the Upper House – and the people
would give it – and go right ahead and abolish it. (Cheers) In the mean-
time although it was a bad policy, they should flood the Chambers with
Labor nominees.

The Financial Aspect

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) contended that the Labor Government had
not done as much as it should have done with regard to the workers on
the waterfront. He also objected to people being forced to go to the
Benevolent Society for relief.

Mr Holloway (AWU) said that although Australia was the richest
country in the world, with bountiful wheat harvests, the people were
paying an extremely high price for their bread. That was not right. As
regards unemployment, he regretted to say that up to date there was no
practical method put forward to solve the problem. It was a strange thing
that while the British Government could lend millions of money to
foreign and bankrupt nations, it did not have any money to lend to its
own oversea Dominions. The banks should be made to realise that they
had no right to refuse accommodation to the country. With such
productivity in the land there was no need for any person to be unemployed. A Government courageous enough would solve this most pressing problem.

**Election of Returning Officer**

At 10 pm Mr Catts moved that the election of a returning officer be proceeded with. He nominated Mr R Sproule, MLC (Solicitor-General). Mr T Arthur nominated Mr W McKinnon. A division secured the election of Mr Sproule, the voting being: Sproule, 112; McKinnon, 100. There was much excitement during and after the election of the returning officer. Several delegates in the back of the hall expressed their opinions by resorting to blows.

Conference adjourned at 10.15 pm till Monday.

**Day 2, Monday, 28 March 1921**

**Sympathy with Ireland**

Mr Kelly (Newtown) moved – “That this Conference sympathises with the Irish people in their endeavour to secure self-determination, as they were participants in the world’s war. Further, we consider that they are entitled to the same considerations as other British Dominions.” He said that nobody would deny the Irish people having the same measure of freedom that the Australian people enjoyed. What was happening in Ireland should not be tolerated. In carrying the motion they were only following the lead set by the British Labor Party and Labor Socialist bodies throughout the world.

Mr Bell (Albury) moved to amend the motion – “That a cablegram be sent to Mr John Storey (State Premier) to request him in the interests of humanity and peace, to interview the Imperial authorities, including the King, for the purpose of asking them to remove the army of occupation from Ireland”. He said that what was being done in Ireland was not in accordance with the wishes of the British people or the workers of any part of the world.

The motion and amendment were carried unanimously.

**Proportional Representation**

Bondi Branch moved – “That the electoral system of Proportional Representation with simplifying amendments be retained”.

Mr Hutchinson (AWU) spoke in favour of the motion. He claimed that the Labor Party had got control of Parliament at the last election
because of Proportional Representation, and it should be retained. Mr Arthur (AWU) said that seats were won in the country under Proportional Representation that would not have been won under the old system. To retain those seats and win others, they should retain Proportional Representation.

Mr G Buckland (AWU) said that all the facts were before the last Conference, and it decided in favour of a return to the single electorates. Why should they be blowing hot and cold on the matter? The old system forced the country to line up either with or against Labor, while Proportional Representation gave new parties a chance. Mr Stewart (Dulwich Hill) also opposed Proportional Representation. It might be all right in theory, but it was rotten in practice.

**Opposition by Federal Members**

Mr A Blakeley, MHR, was opposed to any form of voting which confused the issue. He opposed Proportional Representation because it confused the issue, not only amongst the voters, but amongst their own candidates, who were fighting one another rather than Labor’s enemies. He gave instances of what Labor candidates had done against one another at the last election under Proportional Representation. It wasn’t to the interests of the Movement to have candidates fighting one another. There should be only two parties – Labor and Anti-Labor. The Proportional Representation system gave birth to new parties. He claimed that had the fight been a straight-out one at the last election they would have been better off.

Mr J Stanton (St Leonards) favoured Proportional Representation, and hoped it would be retained.

Mr JH Catts, MHR, (Enmore) said that Proportional Representation postulated the formation of new parties, and in their own ranks had created divisions that would not be lightly forgotten. Labor men were fighting Labor men at the last election. There would be the same, and greater, difficulties if the system were retained. He ridiculed the idea that candidates would regiment themselves under it. Did they do that at the last election? He claimed that intrigue had taken place in electorates at the last election under the system. He instanced Bathurst and Goulburn. Conference decided the matter last year, and the Party should have carried out the desires of Conference.

**Parliamentary Party Favours Proportional Representation**

Mr V Molesworth, MLA, stood by Proportional Representation. He denied that there had been any intrigue on the part of the Party to shelve the matter. The matter was treated by the last Conference without possession of the full facts. Since then they had secured a mass of
information which compelled them to realise that it was beneficial to the Movement. If it was retained, he felt sure that several more seats could be won. If it was turned down, some of the seats they now held would be lost at the next appeal to the country.

Mr Keiran favoured single electorates.

Mr G Cann, MLA, (Minister for Labor) said that under Proportional Representation they got one vote one value. He was surprised that Federal members opposed it after what had happened to the Senate last election. He did not think they would have had as many seats under the old system had it been retained. They figured on winning only 40. Even men in the Party opposed to it admitted that more seats could be won by Proportional Representation, and they would have won more but for Holman putting impossible conditions into the Act. He hoped the motion would be carried.

Mr J Power (AWU) stood for single seats. The country would have to be forced into two distinct camps. Mr O'Dea (Shop Assistants) supported Proportional Representation on the ground that it gave country people Labor representation they could not have gotten under the old system. Miss O'Sullivan (Annandale) favoured single electorates. There was endless intrigue under the present system of Proportional Representation.

**President's Ruling on Matter**

When Conference re-assembled after lunch, the President stated that the motion would need a two-thirds majority as the principle of single electorates was already on the platform, having been carried at the last Conference.

Objection was taken to Mr McGarry (Leichhardt) and Mrs Mullaney (King) on the grounds that they were not living in the electorate they represented. The objections were upheld.

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, said he favoured single electorates. No new arguments had been produced to alter the decision of last Conference.

Mr Tom Keegan (Glebe) was also against the Proportional Representation system, as it opened the way to intrigue. Those who favoured the system did so because they could not retain their seats under any other system.

Captain Toombs said that up to date they had not really dealt with the merits of Proportional Representation, but with abuses that had happened at the last election. He claimed that Proportional Representation, properly conducted, was beneficial to the Party. It wasn't the system that was wrong, but the abuses under it.
Alleged Dangers of New System

Mr TJ Smith claimed there would be more solidarity in the Movement under single electorates. Proportional Representation did not solidify and strengthen the Movement. He honourably carried out his contract at the last election, and as a result lost his seat. Others who did not do so secured seats. It led men to think of themselves instead of being true to the Movement. Mrs Morrison also favoured single electorates.

Mr Mark Gosling, MLA, said that they had been told that under the old system they would have got 50 seats, but the actual fact was that under Proportional Representation they had been able to get a Government. They could get at least six more seats if they retained Proportional Representation, as under it every vote was used, while under the old system many thousands were wasted.

Mr T Lavelle, MHR, opposed Proportional Representation, claiming that eventually it would rend the Movement. Mr Bates (Mill Employees) also opposed the present system. Mr T Arthur (AWU) spoke strongly in favour of retaining Proportional Representation, although he had been against it at the last Conference.

Mr McTiernan (Attorney-General) said the solid weight of the Conference was behind Proportional Representation. The question was before the Parliamentary Party for several months, and they went into all the circumstances very carefully. Members who favoured single electorates now favoured Proportional Representation. He claimed that they could not have won at the last election but for Proportional Representation. They could retain every seat they now held, and gain more if they retained it.

Messrs Bell (Albury) and Hallam (The Rock) were against the retaining of Proportional Representation.

Mr Dooley’s Opposition

Mr Dooley (Acting Premier) said he was opposed to Proportional Representation, had always been opposed to it, and was still opposed to it. There was still a strong minority in the Parliamentary Party opposed to it. The Parliamentary Party had decided that it should be considered by the present Conference. He had no personal interests to serve in the matter, as either system suited him. Whatever the Conference decided would be put into operation by the Government, but personally he thought they should return to the old system.

On the matter being put to the delegates for decision, the voting was: For the motion, 111; against 86.

The President said there was no record as to how it was before the last Conference. There was no record that it was on the agenda paper, or
how many delegates voted for it. If it was constitutionally on the platform, it required a two-thirds majority to rescind it.

Mr TJ Smith (Fire, Brigade Employees) said the fact that it was carried by the Conference and sent along to the Party was proof that it was constitutionally on the platform, and needed the necessary two-thirds majority. Mr Hutchinson (AWU) claimed that it was not constitutionally before the last Conference. He dissented from the statement that it was constitutionally on the platform.

There was considerable uproar in the hall, some delegates contending that it was constitutionally on the platform from the last Conference, others declaring that it was not. Mr Magrath (Printing Trades) contended that the fact that it went into the rule book with the sanction of the Executive was proof that it was continually there.

Dissent was moved – “That the motion of last Conference was not in order, that it was not constitutionally carried, and that it was improperly on the platform”. The dissent was carried, amidst considerable uproar by 100 votes to 83. The effect of the decision was that Proportional Representation with simplifying amendments will be retained.

(Separate report in the Australian Worker, 31 March 1921)

The following matters were crowded out of our report of the ALP Convention printed in another portion of this issue:

Objection to ALP Delegate. A Question of Eligibility

Objection to Delegates

The first business before Conference on Monday morning was a motion for the admission of the press. It was claimed that the press was getting reports of Conference, and as they were from biased sources it would be better if the press was admitted. The motion, however, was defeated by a large majority.

Objection was lodged against Alderman Farrell sitting as a delegate from Darlinghurst on the ground that he lived in King electorate and not in the Darlinghurst electorate. The President said that if the facts were as stated, Mr Farrell was ineligible to sit. Mr Farrell contended that the Executive had ruled that he was eligible.

Dissent was moved to the President’s ruling.

Mr C Last claimed there could be no dissent, as it was a rule of the Platform that debarred Mr Farrell from sitting as a delegate.
Captain Toombs asked if Conference was not master of its own business.
Mr Keiran moved that Mr Farrell be allowed to sit.
The President said this could not be done.
Captain Toombs moved dissent.
The President, “There can be no dissent unless we are disloyal to the constitution”. (Uproar)
Mr Farrell: “I’m not going to be side-tracked like this. I will produce proof from the Executive that I am eligible to sit.”
Captain Toombs (to the President): “Who rules this Conference – you or the Executive?” (Uproar)
The President: “I am going to safeguard the constitution and I won’t be browbeaten by everybody.”
At this stage Mr Farrell left the Conference.

Repudiation of Tickets

Mr J Bailey (AWU) said that in view of what had appeared in the press during the last few days that he was implicated in running a ticket to capture Conference, he wished to give the matter an emphatic denial. He challenged any delegate to bring proof that he had ever discussed the matter with anybody.

Mrs Dwyer (Women Workers) repudiated her name being on any ticket. She refused to be moulded by any faction. Mr Kelly (Newtown) also repudiated his name being attached to a ticket. Mr George Buckland (AWU) said he was in the happy position of being on both tickets, but he repudiated being appointed by any faction. There were names of men on one of the tickets with which his own name had been associated who had advocated conscription, and he wouldn’t stand with them. He stood on his merits as a member of the last Executive, and would contest the election apart from any faction.

Mrs Fowler (Newtown) also refused to have her name on any ticket, as also did Mr Martin (Glebe). The latter speaker said he had never lent himself to any underground engineering, nor would he ever do so. Personally his only fault with Mr Bailey was that he was too modest and reserved for the Movement. (Laughter) He refused to be bought by anybody. In the uproar that followed the matter was dropped.

The President called on motion No 195. There being no mover, the motion lapsed.
ALP NSW ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1921

(Report in the Australian Worker, 7 April 1921)

ALP Elections. The New Executive.
Alderman Lambert Elected President.

The following is the result of the ballot for Executive positions for the ALP Executive for 1921:

President
W H Lambert (elected) 147
H J Mitchell 101
J Murrell 7

Vice-Presidents
J Power (elected) 163
T J Smith (elected) 139
S Toombs 103
W Hutchinson 100

Federal Executive
J Power (elected) 148
Senator Gardiner (elected) 141
J H Catts MHR 120
B Shiels 97

President Returns Thanks

President Lambert, in returning thanks for re-election as President for the forthcoming 12 months, said that two months ago he intended to step down from the position. He was beginning to feel the responsibility he had been called upon to shoulder year after year. But on account of the united hostility shown against him as President, he had decided to stand again. (Cheers) Notwithstanding a most intense campaign of slander and vituperation that had been in full blast against him, he had retained the confidence of the great assembly of Labor in New South Wales. The forces arrayed against him consisted of the capitalistic press, and certain weekly gutter-rags, boodlers, adventurers, thieves, rogues, enemies of the working class, and wasters of every kind. He considered it a great compliment to be elected to the position for the fifth time in succession – a record in the Movement, not only in Australia, but throughout the world. He stood for no factions, but for the good of the whole Labor Movement. He was not one to stir up disaffection in the Movement, and nobody could say that he had had any hand in stirring up factions within it. His sole aim was to do good for the Movement and weld it together as much as possible. For the future, his sole aim would be to carry out the desires of Conference, and the principles and policy of the Labor platform. (Cheers)
Interstate Conference

J Power 127
J H Catts 100

Six delegates should have been elected, but owing to a typographical error only two votes were asked for. The other four delegates required will be elected by Conference.

Central Executive


Methods Criticised

Mr T Lavelle, MHR, in moving the adoption of the Returning Officer’s report, said that the result was a fitting answer to the capitalist press, which had tried to stampede delegates into electing a reactionary Executive. He did not think it fitting, however, that a Minister of the crown should have allowed himself to be used by a faction.

Delegates: He was elected by a majority of this Conference.

Mr Lavelle also complained about the way the ballot had been conducted. For the first time in the taking of an ALP ballot detectives had been brought into the building. Two were always present, and at one time no less than six detectives were in the vicinity of the ballot box. (Shame) That was an insult to the Labor Movement. He objected to statements made by a certain delegate that if a certain section did not capture the ballot by votes it would rush the ballot box and carry it away. (Uproar) He contended that the action of the Returning Officer in compelling certain delegates to sign statutory declarations to establish their bona-fides had intimidated country delegates. He also protested against the figures being made known in the press before being formally announced by the Returning Officer. However, he was satisfied with the result of the ballot and the men and women selected.

Mr McGarry seconded the motion.

“All Feeling Should be Sunk”

Mr Catts, MHR, asked that Conference extend its thanks to the Returning Officer and scrutineers. He congratulated those delegates who had been
selected for office, from the President down. (Laughter) It was a capable and representative Executive. Conference had shown good judgment by refusing to elect en bloc one ticket or the other. He was satisfied with the result and intended to give the new Executive his whole-hearted and loyal support. This was a time when all feeling could be sunk and everybody work together for the good of the Movement. (Cheers) Of the Executive elected, 14 were from his ticket, 12 from the Bailey ticket, and 4 who were on both tickets. That was nothing to be ashamed of. He denied statements that he or the Government were behind the ticket submitted by his party. He concluded by asking that the Executive elected should receive the loyal support of the Movement from one end of the State to the other.

Mr Sproule Explains
Mr Sproule, MLC, denied that he was responsible for the presence of detectives nor had he seen them about the building. Probably reports in the press that an attempt might be made to seize the ballot box were responsible for their presence. As to the alleged intimidation of voters, he gave every courtesy to delegates whether hostile or friendly. Certain delegates were asked to make statutory declarations, but they were challenged by the scrutineers. He then called in the qualifications committee, who decided to secure declarations in order that Conference would be satisfied with the result. He denied giving any information regarding the ballot to the press. He did not know who gave the information – he certainly did not.

Satisfied with the Result
President Lambert said that he was quite satisfied that the Conference had elected a body of men and women capable, sincere, and honest, to conduct the affairs of the Labor Movement as they should be conducted. “We hear”, he said, “a great deal about splits, and so on, but there is no truth in anything that has been said in that direction in the capitalist press. When the general elections come around it will be seen that notwithstanding the arguments that may take place in the Council, the Labor Party and the whole forces of Labor will be solidly behind its candidates and the Executive. The slogan is ‘solidarity’, and if the whole of the workers stick together we have nothing to fear as far as the political fight is concerned.”
Opposition to Militarism

Mr G Buckland (AWU) secured a suspension of the standing orders, and moved the following motion: “That we as members of the Australian Labor Party, pledge ourselves individually and collectively to refuse to participate in any war outside the Commonwealth of Australia”. He suggested that organised Labor throughout Australia should speak with one voice on this matter, so that it would have the effect of hamstringing Hughes when he went to the other side of the world next June. They believed that Hughes intended to pledge Australia to Imperial Federation, and it was imperative that organised Labor, representing 30 per cent of the workers of Australia, should make itself heard.

Mr T Thick (Darlinghurst) seconded the motion, Australia was becoming more Imperialistic than ever. It has been admitted by men like Bonar Law that England could not have won the war without the help of the overseas Dominions and no doubt every effort would be made to bring Australia into any future trouble that the Imperialists of Britain might have. That possibility had to be fought by the workers of Australia.

The motion was carried unanimously. It was also decided that a copy of the motion be sent to the Victorian State Labor Conference with the request that it be passed by that body.

Workmen's Compensation Act

Mr Mitchell (Vice-president) moved, on behalf of the Executive, the following motion urging amendments to the Workmen’s Compensation Act: - (1) “That Clause 4 should be amended by deleting the words in the 7th, 8th, and 9th lines – ‘Employed whose remuneration exceeds £312 per year or a person’. (2) That Schedule 1 (Clause 1, section B) be amended to provide: “Where total or partial incapacity for work results from injury a weekly payment equal to the living wage be declared by the Board of Trade shall be made, and the total liability in respect thereof shall not exceed £1500’. (3) That Schedule 3 be amended to include health inspectors, persons employed in hospitals, or any person employed in any industry who contracts an infectious or contagious disease while in such employ shall be deemed to be subject of this Act.

Mr G Cann (Minister for Labor) pointed out that the Government had made the amendments urged, following the decision of last Con-
ference, but the Upper House had forced them to accept amendments to the bill, which as amended, came into operation last January.

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) moved to strike out all words after “made” in clause 2 and add: “That the Government be urged to bring in a bill providing for an Employers’ Liability Act”.

Mr Holloway (AWU) seconded the amendment. It was necessary in view of the way by which the present law was hedged in with all kinds of limitations. The amount of liability under the present Act was altogether too small.

**Question of Liability**

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA (Camperdown), also supported the amendment. There should be no limit to the compensation paid. The liability should be taken over by the Government which, in turn, should compel employers to pay. Under the present Act he knew of men who were not getting compensation because the employers had gone insolvent. He claimed that full and complete compensation should be paid so that a disabled man’s family should have the same opportunity as if he was working.

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, moved a further amendment: “That the incoming Executive in conjunction with the Parliamentary Party, be deputed to draw up a satisfactory scheme”. He pointed out that the Government had drawn up a bill without limitation, but the Upper House wouldn’t stand it, and forced them to accept a limitation clause. If this Conference ordered a measure without any limitation and they were forced to accept a limitation again from the Upper House, they would be breaking the Labor platform. He referred to the comprehensive measure of unemployment insurance that was to be brought in next session, and asked that delegates’ hands should not be tied.

Mr Wheeler foreshadowed, as a further amendment: “That this Conference recommends the State Government to initiate a system of insurance to cover sickness, accident, unemployment, etc.”

**Queensland Act Favoured**

Captain Toombs (Radio Telegraphists) said something should be done to cut out the legal expenses which employees had to spend to get compensation. It had been done away with by the Queensland Government, and should be done away with here. In 99 cases out of 100 [employers] paid up without any fight in the Courts.

Mr Mitchell met Mr Mills’ suggestion by agreeing to the insertion of the words, “to be paid during the whole period of incapacity, or in the case of death, the sum of £1500 to be paid to the dependents of such persons. Further, that Conference directs the Government to introduce
necessary amendment to give effect to the matter, and also take immediate action in regard to accident insurance.”

After further discussion the motion and amendment were defeated, and Mr Wheeler’s further amendment was carried on the voices.

**Election of Lord Mayor**

Marrickville League moved the following motion: “That the Lord Mayor be elected in caucus by the city aldermen each 12 months.” Mr Lazzarini, MLA, said that any other system of election could not be tolerated. Unless it was done along the lines suggested in the motion, it would mean that persons not living in the city area or subject to the city franchise would take part in the election of Lord Mayor. Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) suggested that the motion should stand over till the Executive’s report was dealt with by Conference. Then it could come up for discussion. This was agreed to by the Conference.

**Shop and Factory Inspectors**

Mr T Keegan (Glebe) moved: “Amendment to Industrial Arbitration Act – That all secretaries and organisers of unions be appointed honorary inspectors under their respective awards”. He claimed that no persons were more capable of looking to the carrying out of awards than the union officials. There was much difficulty at the present time in getting awards adhered to, owing to the fact that there were not enough inspectors. If the motion was carried it would involve no extra expense to the country, as the union officials would carry out the duties in an honorary capacity.

Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants) seconded the motion. He said that at the present time the Department of Labor and Industry would only sue after an inspection by the departmental inspectors. He had made applications time and again to the Department to have inspections made, but had been turned down, unless he was asked to furnish minute particulars. The Department was overloaded with red tape. It was imperative that Conference should not only pass the motion, but see that it was enforced.

**Some Grave Charges**

There were instances where workers were paid less than award rates, where girls were indecently molested, and all kinds of immoral suggestions made to them. In many cases girls were not even safe when visiting the lavatories set apart for their own use. In other cases, such as in Greek shops, there was only one lavatory for males and females, and it was no unusual thing for girls on visiting the lavatories to find men in
them. In many of the shops the employees were locked up like rabbits – an ever-present danger in case of fire.

There were cases where complaints had been launched for breaches of the awards, but no prosecutions had followed. Out of 2000 prosecutions laid last year, 1987 were won, yet the employers were only fined £330 – something like £1 for each breach. It paid employers to break the regulations. If he liked he could get prosecution after prosecution against the employers, but many complaints he had sent to the Department six months back were not yet dealt with. Every secretary of a trade union was complaining of the treatment received from the Department.

Mr Vernon’s Objection

Mr Vernon (United Laborers) moved, as an amendment: “That the Government appoint more inspectors immediately to carry out the work of the Department”. He claimed that union officials had enough work to do at present, and to take on this new job was like asking them to blackleg. There were men paid to do this work, and the Government should see that they did it.

Mr G Cann (Minister for Labor) admitted that there were not enough inspectors under the Act. He wanted more, but owing to the financial position could not get them. Some of the charges made by Mr O’Dea were untrue. He challenged anybody to say that any complaint sent to him personally had been neglected. It wasn’t his duty to send the inspectors on fishing expeditions, when union secretaries could give them exact particulars of breaches of the awards. What sort of unionists were they who worked in places where the awards were being broken without reporting the matters?

Mr Cann was subjected to considerable interruption while he was speaking. A delegate charged him with sending men to scab on the waterfront workers. Mr Cann denied this, claiming that three men sent there were sent by mistake by one of his officers. He was an out-and-out unionist, and ran his office on unionistic lines. He asked any union secretary who had a grievance to bring it forward and he would get it attended to at once.

Tardy Justice

Mr E Stein (Railway Workers, AWU) also complained of delays in dealing with breaches of the awards. The Minister should force his officers to give justice to the workers. He knew many cases extending over the past six years, where complaints had been lodged, but no prosecutions followed. They got answers two or three months later saying an investigation had been held, but that it did not disclose any ground for prosecution. He knew cases where men were unable to get
justice for nine months. There should be some method of expediting business so that complaints could be dealt with in, say, two or three weeks.

Mr Flannigan (Newcastle) supported the motion. There was a great deal going on in the Department with which the Minister was not familiar. He knew cases where employers refused to show their books to the investigating officers, even when they were accompanied by policemen.

Mr Vernon’s amendment was added to the motion and carried on the voices.

**Providing Against Exploitation**

Mrs K Dwyer (Women Workers) moved: “That industrial wage awards be supplied to boys and girls’ schools and hung in conspicuous places. Teachers to be instructed to call pupils’ (of 13 years and over) attention to the various trades and callings, with wages and conditions”. She said that too often children going to work at an early age were exploited because of their ignorance of the awards. The motion was carried.

**Preference to Unionists**

Mr Mitchell (Vice-President) moved: “That an absolute Preference to Unionists Act be immediately given effect to”. The Act should also include public servants. Captain Toombs seconded the motion, which was carried after a short discussion. It was also decided that a copy of the motion be forwarded to the Federal Labor Party for inclusion in its platform.

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**Day 3, Tuesday, 29 March 1921**

**ALP Executive’s Report**

[The report in the Australian Worker at this stage provides a summary of the Executive Report, which has been reproduced in its entirety at the beginning of this chapter, so is not repeated here.]

**Healthy State of Finances**

In presenting the report, the General Secretary (Mr W Carey) said that financially, the NSW Branch was in a very healthy state. At the end of March they would have cleared off all debts and have a balance of £1300 in the bank. (Applause)
Mr Wheeler (Transport Workers) protested at no mention in the report of industrial matters, particularly the waterside workers. He claimed that the Government by not taking action was giving encouragement to scabs. He claimed that the Executive was responsible for not seeing that the Government carried out its pre-election pledge regarding the 1917 men. The scabs should have been rooted out long ago, and had there been a proper Labor Government this would have been done.

There was considerable uproar while Mr Wheeler was addressing Conference.

Who Should Rule?

Mr J Power (AWU) also regretted that the 1917 matter had not been dealt with in the report. The report was altogether too brief, though he admitted it was impossible to embrace everything that had been done in a small report. Probably the Executive thought it best to deal only with outstanding matters. After stressing the need for some machinery to restore harmony within the Movement, Mr Power said the Labor Movement should not permit the Parliamentary Party to run the business without knowing what was being done. The acts of Labor Ministers were not their own business, but the concern of the Party and Executive. Members of the Executive had not been consulted on some of the important matters that came before Parliament. Conference would have to lay it down very definitely as to who was to rule in this matter – whether the Parliamentary Party should speak for the Movement, or whether the Executive should be the commanding voice. The better grip they kept on the Party the better it would be for the Movement.

Dealing with the Upper House question and the closing of Parliament for several months, Mr Power said he objected to Mr Storey journeying to a bankrupt country, mortgaged up to the hilt, to borrow more money to still further mortgage the State. The Executive rightly or wrongly said this should not have happened. Regarding the Upper House, he was of the opinion that unless they did something drastic to remove the real obstacle to Labor legislation they were in the position of a doctor trying to cure a cancer by the application of Zam-Buk ointment. They could go on for years, but unless they took steps to remove the Upper House they could do nothing.

Mr Storey and the Governor

He did not believe that if men were nominated to the Upper House they would take no steps to vote it out. He believed he could get enough men that night who would vote it out in 24 hours. (Cheers) They could flood the Upper House if they so desired. Mr Storey went to the State Governor, who told him that no more men should be put in the Upper
House. They should have told the Governor that they were the Government, and if he wouldn’t make the appointments they would take steps to deal with it. Mr Storey should have told the Governor that the Executive were the advisors of the people and that it wanted its wishes carried out. If he declined, the British Government should have been told that as the NSW Government was supposed to have self-governing rights it intended to exercise them. (Applause) The matter should then have been made a live question before the people of the country. “When Mr Storey came to the Executive with the letter from the State Governor on this matter”, said Mr Power, “the Executive should have come down to Conference, asked the Conference to stand behind it, and force the wish of Conference on the Government”.

**Press Attacks on the President**

Referring to the press attacks on the President Mr Power said it wasn’t Lambert personally they were attacking, but the Labor Movement, which was growing strong and likely to interfere with the privileges of the exploiters. Amongst those attacking Mr Lambert most was Joynton Smith, who had been put in the Upper House by a Labor Government. Joynton Smith who had been put in the holding more jobs than one [sic]– but what about Joynton Smith? Mr Power closed by further protesting against Mr Storey going to London to borrow money from the Jews, and mortgage the lives of the unborn in this country.

Mr Seale (Waterside Workers) also protested at no mention in the report of the industrial position. There was nothing more important than the question of the 1917 men, yet not a word appeared in the report about them. The waterside workers did not get a fair deal from the Government, whose duty it was to see that the victimised men got justice. Personally, he thought Mr Cann was prepared to do much for them, but apparently he was checkmated by other members of the Cabinet. The report had plenty to say about the Upper House, possibly because certain men from the Executive had not been appointed there.

**Ministers Blamed**

Mr Magrath (Printing Trades) claimed that the Executive had done its best to have the decisions of Conference carried out. The fault lay with the Ministers – including some who were on the platform that night. Ministers pledged themselves at last Conference to deal with the Upper House, but nothing had been done. Mr Storey came to the Executive and said he had been to the Governor, who said that the work of the Upper House did not warrant any fresh appointments. The Governor also said that it was an age-long custom to send to the Upper House men who had rendered signal public duty to the country. The only signal duty some of
the former appointees had done was to exploit the people for their own profit. Mr Storey didn’t even report this matter to some of his colleagues till he came before the Executive. Wasn’t it right [that] the Executive should take some action and force the Government to stand up to the Upper House pledge? He protested against the closing of Parliament for six or seven months. There was plenty of work to be done. The excuse for closing Parliament was that it was an age-long custom to close Parliament for a long term after the first session. But would Labor follow an age-long custom? The Government was sent to Parliament to do work, not to follow the custom set by Tories. Referring to Mr Storey’s trip to London, the speaker claimed that it was not necessary. Sir Timothy Coghlan had informed them that what Storey was wanted for was not finance matters at all.

**Mr Dooley’s Explanation**

Mr Dooley (Acting Premier) who was considerably heckled, told Conference what the Government had done since he took office. He spoke mainly along the lines of his speech to delegates on the opening day of the Conference. He urged that instead of abusing the Government, the leagues and unions should work with it, and better progress should be made. Except [for] Mr Estell and himself and the Premier, there wasn’t a Minister who had had previous experience. It took some little time for them to get set in their positions. He asked where was there an Australian Government that had done as much as the Storey Government during its first year of office? Even if they did adjourn for six months they were not idle, but always doing something. It was unfair to delegates to complain against the Government which had tackled half its pledges within twelve months. If the Upper House could have been abolished by resolutions it would have been abolished long ago. In Queensland they had not abolished it. They had swamped it. There were many difficulties in the way of dealing with the New South Wales Upper House. When the Government did deal with the Upper House it hoped to place enough men there to give them a majority to pass Labor legislation. It would see that all men appointed were tried and trusted members of the Labor Movement.

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) also objected to omissions from the report regarding the industrial position. Conference should instruct the Government to do something more than make Ministerial statements to Conference.

**The Motherhood Endowment Bill**

Mrs Dwyer (Women Workers) said that the Executive had not neglected the wishes of Conference. Any neglect was due entirely to the
Government. Something should have been done with the Motherhood Endowment Bill. Even if there was no money in the Treasury the bill should have been passed to show the women of this country that the Government was sincere. When Mr Storey said there was no money to finance the measure Mr Catts criticised Mr Storey. Now he was with him. It seemed to her that before the Executive Mr Catts ran with the hares, while before the public he hunted with the hounds.

Mr Cann (Minister for Labor) replied to criticisms levelled against his department in connection with the victimised 1917 waterside workers. The Executive had done its part in trying to get the matters settled. The Government had done, not everything, but all it could do up to the present.

The Victimised Men

Mr T Keegan (Glebe) said that all men dismissed in 1917 by executive action could be restored in the same way if the Government had only the courage to do it. There was no necessity for Mr Storey to go to London for money when they had so much wealth in the country. Mr Coats also took the same view. He thought that as any amount of money could have been raised for war, money could have been raised for public works and the Motherhood Endowment Bill.

Mr Keiren (Leichhardt) objected to a Labor Government being dictated to by an imported Governor on the question of the Upper House. If that was allowed to continue, where was the responsible government they were supposed to have? Conference should force the Government to deal with the Upper House question or wipe it off the platform altogether. Mr Paull (Tramway Workers) said that while many of the 1917 men had been re-employed, none had been reinstated. He wanted them reinstated to their former status. Mr Toombs (Radio Telegraphists) charged both Executive and Government with blowing hot and cold. Some of the things done by the Central Executive would be hurled at the Labor Movement at future elections.

At this stage the President declared the Conference adjourned till the following evening (Wednesday).

Day 4, Wednesday, 30 March 1921

Defence of AWU

Discussion on the Executive’s report was continued on Wednesday night (March 30). Mr George Buckland (St George) said an attempt was being made to lead delegates to believe that the AWU “bossed” the Conference.
That was untrue. The AWU had no more representation at Conference than it was entitled to. Delegates should not forget the important part played by the AWU in the making of the Labor Movement, not only morally but financially as well. The AWU carried the banner for Labor long before the political movement had taken shape. Its members preached the Labor gospel into the highways and byways of the land when it was unpopular to stand behind the Labor banner. More than any other organisation in the Commonwealth it had helped to make the Labor Movement what it was. Where would the Labor Movement have been today but for the AWU, with its power as a union, its finances, and its chain of Labor papers? Where would it have been during the conscription issue but for the AWU and its press? Those were matters delegates should remember.

**Captain Toombs Attacked**

It was very strange to hear Captain Toombs accusing the Executive of blowing hot and cold. Who, more than Captain Toombs, had blown hot and cold? Who was Captain Toombs? What did Captain stand for, anyhow? Where was he during the conscription issue? Wasn’t he the man who stood in Parliament and said that we would have to make our marble as to whether we would go and fight or not? That was the Captain Toombs who stood for conscription, and later on stood for anti-conscription. When a split was threatened in the Labor Movement where did Captain Toombs stand then? He stood with the ‘breakaway’ party. (Uproar and shouts of “Liar”) He was with the ‘breakaway’ section when he thought that Labor was going to fall, but when he saw that the ‘breakaway’ had failed he proved a traitor to the ‘breakaway’ section. (Uproar and cheers) Wasn’t it Mr Storey who told us that when Holman wanted a lapdog he called in Captain Toombs, well knowing that the dirty work would be well and faithfully done. The Captain was like a barrel – all wind and sound, but very little substance.

**Appointment of Lord Mayor**

There had been a lot of talk about the Executive’s action in electing the Lord Mayor of Sydney. But did delegates know that the Executive acted on the wishes of the city leagues? Why were certain aldermen opposed to the Executive’s action? Wasn’t there some underlying motive? Be sure there was a reason for it. Dicky Bramston and others had appointed a former Lord Mayor who profiteered on the people. There was something that influenced them against the best man of the Party then.

What had been done by the present Lord Mayor since he had been appointed? Hadn’t he justified his appointment? Hadn’t he been approved throughout the length and breath of the country? Anyhow, who
was going to rule the Labor Movement – individuals or the Executive? “I say emphatically”, added Mr Buckland, “that the destiny of the Labor Movement should rest with the Executive”. (Cheers) “The Executive did the proper thing when it took the appointment of the Lord Mayor in hand. It called for nominations and took a ballot. Was there anything wrong with that? (No) I am going to vote for Bill Lambert because I think he is the man best fitted to carry Labor’s banner in this country.” (Cheers)

Parliament Should Meet

Regarding the complaints that the report was not full enough, Mr Buckland contended that it was a fuller report than that of former years, and while many things had been omitted, that did not mean that the Executive had neglected them. He contended Parliament should assemble and get on with Labor’s policy. What did they care what former Parliaments did? The fact that the Executive was attacking the Parliamentary Party for closing down Parliament for six or seven months showed that it had the interests of the Movement at heart. He claimed that the record of the past Executive was good enough to secure its re-election.

Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) said he wasn’t pledged to any faction. He stood for the Labor Movement. Some people had said the Movement was ruled by the AWU. The AWU was a fighting organisation when Labor was struggling in its babyhood. When Beeby placed laws on the statute book of NSW to close the doors of the ALP it was the AWU that defied him. That gave the people of the country a sense of security. The past Executive was, in his opinion, the best that had ever existed. Anybody who was against the Executive was helping Labor’s enemies to down Labor. He claimed that the AWU hadn’t its rightful representation at Conference when compared with the representation of smaller organisations.

President Lambert’s Record

He didn’t know Mr Lambert too well, but he knew his record as a Labor man. Mr Lambert was known and respected throughout the State. When they heard in the country that Lambert was to be Lord Mayor of Sydney they knew that Labor’s interests would be protected.

Mrs Bailey (Caterers) drew attention to some literature issued by opponents of the Executive, particularly a leaflet “Bust Boss Bailey”. “A cat is a clean animal – sometimes. (Laughter) But how can a cat be clean in its public affairs, when it is not clean in its domestic affairs?” (Laughter)
Mr Allam (The Rock) referred to the press attacks on the President and the Labor Movement. The capitalist press, he said, would give anything to see Mr Lambert removed from his position. Did delegates think that if Mr Lambert had been a weak man, the press would have attacked him? It was because he was a strong leader for Labor that the press was attacking and abusing him.

A delegate drew attention to voting instructions being sent through the post to delegates. An attempt was being made to canvass for votes. The letter was signed by Mr Catts. (Disorder)

Mr Shearer (Jewellers) suggested that the various matters in the Executive’s report be taken seriatim. He drew attention to there being no mention in the report to the alteration in the rules. Rule 13, he claimed, had been wiped out without the consent of the Conference.

**Trouble at the Polling Booth**

At this stage attention was drawn to the congestion around the polling booth. Because of the crowd, delegates were unable to get in to vote. The President stated that if the passage-way wasn’t cleared he would take steps to have it cleared. Later it was reported that three policemen were stationed in the proximity of the polling booth. This brought angry shouts from delegates. The President thought there was no necessity for this, and after some discussion it was decided to appoint two doorkeepers to keep the crowd back. Messrs Mullins and Hackett were appointed. An angry scene followed. It was contended that Mr Hackett was not elected on the voices of Conference, while Mr Smith wanted to know why the name of a delegate he nominated had not been submitted to Conference. Much excitement prevailed. Later on Mrs Dwyer complained that she was unable to vote, as a few people were monopolising the polling booth and preventing others from voting. The President gave orders that the voting should be expedited, as many delegates were leaving for the country on the morrow. Eventually the matter quietened down, and consideration of the Executive report was continued.

**Should Work in Harmony**

Mr A Vernon (United Laborers) said that many who were now denouncing the Ministry were the first to wait on the doormats of Ministerial offices.

Mr Gavin Sutherland (Darling Harbour League) made an attack on Mr Bramston in connection with something that happened years ago, when, he alleged, Mr Bramston stood on the platform of an anti-Labor candidate. Mr Bramston denied the allegation.

Mrs Morrison (Petersham) said it was a question of who was going to govern - the Government or the Executive? She had no time for
factions, and worked for the Movement without fee or reward. She intended to elect members to the Executive on their merits. She claimed that the Government was doing its best under great disadvantages. She suggested the Government and the Executive working in harmony for the good of the Movement as a whole.

**Mr Bailey and Returned Soldiers**

Mr Stewart (Dulwich Hill) read a newspaper extract which he said stated that Mr J Bailey told a Goulburn audience that he would do his best to prevent the repeal of the Returned Soldiers’ Preference Act.

Mr Bailey denied the statement. Mr Stewart said that Mr Bailey’s place was to deny the statement in the press where it was published. Why hadn’t he done that? He denied that the faction he stood for was out to disrupt the Labor Movement, or that it engaged in wire-pulling. Some of the actions of the Executive he applauded; others he condemned. He was against the Executive electing the Lord Mayor.

Mr Clear (Albury) criticised the administration of various departments by Ministers, and their lack of looking after country interests. The wants of farmers should be considered just as much as those of the city workers.

**“Bossism” Denied**

Mr C Last (AWU) also referred to the part played by the AWU in the building of the Labor Movement. He mentioned how, during the conscription issue, the AWU not only helped throughout the land, but lent money for the fight, and opened a credit for the Party with *The Worker* office. Where would they have been but for the powerful help given them by *The Worker* and its editorial staff? (Cheers) Yet because it asked for adequate representation for 45,000 members it was told that it was “bossing the show”. Charges of corruption had been made against the Executive, but he challenged Mr Catts or anybody else to produce one item of corruption that could be laid at the door of the Executive. He claimed that Catts had men on his ticket who had raised the sectarian issue at last election, and who had voted more than once. The main bone of contention was the closing of Parliament. The Executive wanted it opened for business. Mr Catts favoured that course up to a few weeks ago - now he was backing and filling about it. It was wrong to shut Parliament. Mr Storey should never have gone to England. What the Executive did, it had done in the best interests of the Movement.
**Why Executive Elected the Lord Mayor**

“You want to know why we took in hand the matter of electing the Lord Mayor?” said Mr Last. “Well, I’ll tell you. The Moore Street extension scheme was on. There was to be a little commission of £100,000. But that seemed too much, so it was reduced to £40,000. Wasn’t it time that the Executive stepped in and took a hand in the business when that kind of thing was going on? (Applause) I tell you, delegates, the Executive was well justified in the action it took in electing the Lord Mayor. It seems that Mr Joynton Smith is very much concerned that Bill Lambert is Lord Mayor. Of course he is. So would you, too, if you were Joynton Smith. This gentleman is not attacking Bill Lambert week after week for nothing.” Referring to the ticket being circulated against the present Executive, Mr Last defied Mr Catts to point to one wrong thing in his life. It was an open book. He had done spade work in the Movement without fee or reward. “But Mr Catts”, added Mr Last, “always saw to it that he had a paid position”.

**Mr Bramston’s Opposition**

Mr Bramston thought the Parliamentary party could answer for itself. He wanted to see the scabs removed from the various public departments who were causing irritation to the true unionists. He referred to the scab bosses. If that were done the rank and file were quite content to await a settlement of their grievances until the Commission’s report was issued. He opposed the selection of the Lord Mayor by the Executive, and claimed that by so doing the Executive had placed the Municipal Party in a position of humiliation. The Municipal Party had rules for the election of Lord Mayor. Why were they not adhered to? The Municipal Party had done much towards carrying out the Labor platform. It instituted the 44-hour week, and didn’t want a Commission to settle it for them. He objected to the criticisms against some of the Ministers – especially those who had had no former experience. They should have been given a fair chance.

Mr Doyle (Belmore) upheld the Executive’s action in appointing the Lord Mayor. No rule had been broken in appointing him. He also opposed the closing of Parliament for six weeks.

**Day 5, Thursday, 31 March 1921**

Finality was reached on the debate on the Executive’s report on Thursday evening last. Mr E Stein (Railway Workers) said they had been debating the matter for over seven hours, and he thought it was time
they took a vote on the matter. There was much business sent along by
the leagues and unions to be dealt with by Conference.

The resolution adopting the Executive’s report was carried on the
voices amidst cheers.

(Report in the Australian Worker, 14 April 1921)

**NSW Labor Conference. Government and Waterside Workers.**

**Labor Policy and Rural Interests**

**Wants of Policemen**

Messrs T Pauling and G Gavin, of the Police Association, addressed Con-
ference. They asked the assistance of Conference in securing the
amending of the Arbitration Act to allow the police to be registered as an
industrial organisation, also that a Police Appeals Board should be
constituted. Conference will consider their claims at a later date.

**Scab Labor on the Waterfront**

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) secured the suspension of the standing
orders, and moved – “That it be an instruction from the Conference to
the Government that where it has power it should cancel the leases of all
premises held by employers when such premises are being used for the
housing or engaging of loyalist labor. Further, that this Conference is of
the opinion that all Government Labor Bureaux should be under the
supervision of men who are in sympathy with the Labor Movement.” He
said the time had arrived when Labor’s policy of Preference to Unionists
should be put into operation, particularly on the waterfront. It took the
Nationalist Government less than a week to inaugurate the scab bureau,
and should not take the Labor Government long to abolish them. He
demanded that Conference tell the Government to put the Labor policy
regarding the scabs into operation at once. The Department of Labor and
Industry was trying to break down unionism, and defeat the Govern-
ment’s policy. Officials who did the duty work of the Nationalist
Government were still there, and how could they serve two masters?
How could they give sympathetic administration to Labor’s policy?
Instructions from the Minister for Labor were not being carried out by
the Department. Conference should not tinker with the question, but
force the Government to do its duty.
The Government’s Sincerity

Mr T Payten (Darling Harbour) seconded the motion. They had repeatedly asked for the removal of the scabs, but the scabs were still there. The Government either believed in scabbery or it did not. If it did not, it should remove the scabs. Since 1917 there had been nothing but poverty and want in the homes of the waterside workers. The wives and kiddies had put up a brave fight with their husbands and fathers, and the Government should do something to end the struggle against hunger that had lasted nearly four years.

Mr Wheeler (Transport Workers) read a report submitted to Cabinet on the matter. He hoped the resolution would be carried. Mr Gallagher (Tramway Union) said the resolution did not go far enough. A stop should be put to the backing and filling on the part of the Government regarding the victimised men. What applied to the waterside workers also applied to the railway and tramway men. He thought it damnable that under a Labor Government railway and tramway men should be forced to attend a Royal Commission and show the difference between victimisation and vindictiveness.

Nationalists and Shipowners

Mr Lang (Treasurer) said that when he assumed office one of the first documents placed before him was a proposal by the Holman Government to give the shipowners a 15-year lease of the Model Lodging House. The Nationalists tried to get it signed before they left office, but missed by a day. He refused to sign the leases. (Cheers) As the shipowners were in under a yearly tenancy, the Government was unable to do anything until the other day, when it stepped in and resumed the property, giving the shipowners notice to quit. Had they thrown the shipowners out before, they would have had to compensate them for the full period of the proposed lease. The Government had also issued notices to quit at other bureaux, while the Harbour Trust had been instructed not to re-lease State property to the shipowners. If delegates did not believe them, they could come to the Treasury, where they would see the papers. The Government had already done what Conference was asking them to do. Mr McTiernan (Attorney-General) supported Mr Lang, and explained the legal aspect of the matter.

Armed Protection for Scabs

Mr Seale (Waterside Workers) said that under the present Government men had been sent along to protect scabs working at Darling Island, and each one of them was armed not only with the regulation revolver, but
with an extra revolver as well. (Shame) He got his information from a police officer, whose name he could not divulge.

Mr EJ Kavanagh (Vice-President of the Executive Council) said the Government would leave no stone unturned to do everything to rectify what had been done by the Nationalist Government in the 1917 strike. He thought that having heard what the Government was doing, the men in the waterfront would say that the Government was doing its best for them, and would leave it to the Government to secure further justice for them. The Government could establish Government bureaux, but they could not force the employers to get their men from them. In any case, they would have to give preference to returned soldiers, because of the Returned Soldiers Act. The Government did not wish to establish the bureaux. Regarding the charge that scabs had been sent by the Department of Labor and Industry to the waterfront, it was by an error. Mr Belmore had not gone out of his way to thwart the Government’s policy. On the other hand, Mr Belmore was a good Labor man, and a member of a Labor League.

Mr Gibbons suggested that the matter be referred to the incoming Executive for consideration, with a view to having it cleared up.

How Scabs Should Be Handled

Digger Dunn said that the Government promised to deal with the scabs when it got into office, but had not done so. There were 6000 men on the waterfront, with 15,000 persons depending on them, who wanted justice. If the Government wanted to retain the confidence of those people, it was time they did something to deal with the scabs. The game had gone quite far enough.

Acting Premier Dooley said nobody was more earnest to do the work of clearing out the scabs than the Government.

A Delegate: Well, it is not being done.

Mr Dooley said if the bureaux were abolished, nobody would be more pleased than the Government. But the State Government had done its part. What remained to be done was a matter for the Federal Government, and the waterside workers knew it. It was useless for Conference to carry a resolution asking the Government to do something that it had already done. That was only wasting the time of Conference.

Mr Seale asked why, if the abolition of the bureaux was a Federal matter, every member of the State Labor Party at the last election was pledging themselves [to] what would be done if they were elected.

Mr Dooley said they only had control of the coastal shipping, and they had abolished the scabs there.
Extension of Banking Facilities

The motion moved by Mr Mills was carried on the voices.

Shortly before the adjourning of Conference on Thursday night, the following motion was called on: “That the functions of the State Savings Bank be extended to the Bank of Trade and Commerce”.

Mr Lang (Treasurer) said the Labor Government had already carried out the principle. There was a clause in the Rural Bank Act providing for it. The Government Savings Bank could be made a trading bank at any time.

Mr Holloway (AWU) contended that Mr Lang’s statement was not a correct one. What had been done only referred to the farmers, and not to the general community.

Day 6, Friday 1 April 1921

Imperial Federation

Friday evening was devoted to dealing with a big batch of correspondence which had been addressed to the Conference. Arising out of a letter forwarded by the “Sons of Australia” on the question of Imperial Federation, Conference carried the following resolution: “That this Conference is opposed to all forms of Imperial Federation. That the incoming Executive be instructed to watch any development in that direction, and to take any action they deem necessary in order to combat it.”

The Ben Fuller Gift

A lively discussion took place as the result of a letter from the Professional Musicians’ Union protesting against the acceptance by the Labor Government of the recent monetary gifts from Mr Ben J Fuller for educational purposes. Mr AE O’Brien moved that the letter should be brought under the notice of the State Parliamentary Party. This was agreed to on the voices.

The Unemployment Problem

The question of dealing with the vital matter of unemployment was raised by Mr J Power. The problem was greater today than it had been for the last 20 years. He moved – “That a committee of seven be appointed to confer with the Labor Government on the question of unemployment, and report back to the Conference by the following Wednesday. It was pitiful to think that in such a rich country people should be thrown helpless, workless and destitute on the labor market. It
was a slur on their present form of government that the big financial interests could say that in such a wealth-producing country men should starve.

Mr Gibbons supported the motion. He protested against the unemployed being treated like paupers. They should be provided with work.

Mr Geddes (Boilermakers) suggested that as a committee had already been formed at the Trades Hall, the committee appointed by Conference should work in with the Trades Hall Committee.

**How to get the Money**

Mr MA Davidson, MLA, supported the motion. He contended that instead of going to the capitalists, cap in hand, and begging for money at high rates of interest, the Government should use a little ‘direct action’. The Government could get all the money it wanted by a graduated wealth tax, a graduated land tax, and other methods. It was time the Government stopped mortgaging the country to the financial Jews in London. It had no right to pawn posterity to such men. Mr Storey had been told that unless he modified certain legislation he would get no money. If that was the only condition on which the Premier could get money, then he (the speaker) hoped that Mr Storey wouldn’t get a brass farthing. Mr Storey should tell the London capitalists that the Labor Government would not be dictated to by them. It was deplorable that men should have to walk up and down the streets and be debarred of the right to work and live.

Mr EC Kavanagh, MLC, welcomed the appointment of a committee to suggest some method by which the problem could be solved. Referring to the recent alleged batoning of unemployed by the police, he had asked for a report. The police protested against the statement that batons had been used. The speaker said that if any delegate could give him proof that a police officer had used his baton on the unemployed he would deal with him. The Government wouldn’t be doing its duty if it allowed policemen to baton unemployed men on the streets.

Mrs Morrison said that her daughter and others were working quite close to the scene where the batoning took place, and were prepared to furnish affidavits on the matter. They had witnessed the police drag an old man up a side lane, and, although he pleaded that he had done nothing, they manhandled him. (Shame)

The motion moved by Mr Power was carried on the voices.

**Insane Asylum Administration**

Dr Thompson addressed Conference on alleged misadministration in lunatic asylums and the need for repealing the present antiquated Lunacy Act and introducing a more modern Act. He also urged that a
Royal Commission be appointed to investigate the Farr case, and other cases of a similar nature.

After discussion regarding the Farr case, and the general administration of asylums under the Lunacy Act, a motion was carried instructing the Cabinet to set up a Public Service Commission to inquire into the cases of sane and insane persons who might be detained in any asylum against his or her will.

Day 7, Saturday, 2 April 1921

**Shooting of Mervyn Flanagan**

The first business on Saturday night was a motion submitted by Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, who moved – “That it be a direction to the Attorney-General that every effort should be made to bring about the prosecution of Wearne, who shot Mervyn Flanagan in Bridge Road, Camperdown, in 1917”. Mr McGarry seconded the motion. Mr Sproule (Solicitor-General) asked that the debate be deferred until Mr McTiernan and himself had a chance to go into the matter and place their views before delegates.

On the suggestion of Mr McTiernan, Mr Stuart-Robertson altered his motion to read – “That this Conference requests the Attorney-General to consider all the evidence and circumstances surrounding the death of Mervyn Flanagan, to decide whether any person should be put upon his trial or not”.

**Trading Bank Facilities**

Mr Kelly (Newtown) moved – “That the functions of the State Savings Bank be extended to a Bank of Trade and Commerce”. Although the Treasurer (Mr Lang) had stated that the Rural Bank Act gave effect to the motion, they wanted some suggestions as to when the functions of the Savings Bank would be extended to help persons with small means. If it was good enough for rural communities, surely it was good enough for others, especially those in the metropolitan area. Conference wanted to know from the Minister when the Act was likely to be put into operation. Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) said something should be done immediately to stabilise credit for producers. There was a great need to provide for the conservation of fodder. Unless some such provision was made there would be more unemployment in the future than at present.

Mr McTiernan (Attorney-General) said that it was a coincidence that only last week the Cabinet had appointed a sub-committee to consider a
scheme for fodder conservation. The sub-committee was going into the matter, and legislation would be passed next session. The motion was carried on the voices.

**Housing the People**

A lengthy discussion took place on the question of housing. Eventually it was decided “that Conference appoint a special committee to submit a housing scheme for the working class and regulate rents”. A committee of five was appointed.

During the discussion Mr Dooley (Acting Premier) made an important announcement regarding the Government’s housing policy. He said the housing of the people was one of the most important questions that Conference could deal with. He hoped the time would come when nobody would be living in the slums. The Government had decided that it would purchase no more land from the capitalists while there was Crown land available. The Government wasn’t satisfied that it was getting a fair and square deal from the landowners. They had to consider the question of providing homes for the workers at a reasonable price. He had consulted all bodies interested in building, and had come to the conclusion that the piecemeal system was futile. The only thing to be done was to build the houses in bulk, and this would be done when the Government had the money. Mr Dooley intimated that 1000 houses would be built by the Government in the near future. Notwithstanding the boast by the Railway Commissioners that travelling in New South Wales was the cheapest in the world, he contended that train and tram fares would have to be considerably cheapened to induce people to live out of the city area. The Government would not build homes in the slums. It would build decent homes, with three bedrooms, and would give first preference to people with children. By starting a comprehensive scheme, utilising the State forests for timber, the State mills for preparing materials, and buying all other requirements in bulk, and thus cutting out all middlemen, the Government would be able to build homes at least £200 below the present price. He had received a cable from Mr Storey which seemed to indicate that they would get money, and when it was available the Government would go ahead with a comprehensive scheme.
Day 8, Monday, 4 April 1921

Forty-Four Hour Week

On Monday evening (April 4) Liquor Trades delegates submitted – “That the Conference bring forward a bill establishing a 44-hour week”. Delegates speaking to the motion contended that the Government should make the 44-hour week mandatory. At the present time, while strong unions were able to force the 44-hour week, smaller and weaker unions were unable to do so. It should not be left to any Commission to decide. The Government should have backbone enough to say that it was the policy of the Labor Movement, and put it into operation throughout the whole of the State. The motion was carried unanimously.

Women JsP and Jurors

On the motion of Mrs Fowler, supported by Mrs Gray and Mrs Dwyer, it was decided that the Chief Secretary be instructed to immediately appoint women to the Commission of the Peace, also women jurors.

Disarmament

The following motion was submitted by Bondi Labor League: “The complete elimination from the ALP platform of all matters relative to defence and the substitution of a plank providing for the total abolition of all military and naval preparations within the Commonwealth. The Interstate Executive to vigorously prosecute a campaign for world-wide disarmament by getting into touch with all pacifist groups in other countries, industrial, political, or otherwise, in order to devise common action for the total abolition of military preparation.”

The motion was responsible for a lively discussion – argument centring principally around the first clause of the motion. Mr J Power moved as an amendment that the first clause be deleted. He said that there were already many drastic alterations to the Defence Act to be put into operation when Labor came into power in the Federal Parliament. The proper thing to do was to get a Labor Federal Government elected. Then they would be able to guard themselves against wars with the workers of other nations. As an ideal the complete elimination of all forms of militarism was a grand thing, but they had to realise that the time would have to come when the workers would have to defend themselves not only from foreign aggression, but from the capitalists in the country. Did they think that if the time came when the capitalists were called upon, constitutionally, to give over their hold on the country and its wealth they would do so willingly? The workers may have to resort to force to get
what the capitalists would not give them constitutionally. Wasn’t it time
the workers considered that aspect of the matter?

The amendment was carried by 88 to 16 – it reading as follows: “This
Conference is of the opinion that the Interstate Executive should
vigorously prosecute a campaign for world-wide disarmament by get-
ing in touch with all pacifist groups in other countries, industrial,
political, or otherwise, in order to devise common action for the total
abolition of military preparation.”

Conference adjourned till the following evening (Tuesday).

Day 9, Tuesday, 5 April 1921

Country Business
Tuesday evening (April 5) was devoted to the consideration of country
business. A country committee, appointed by the Conference at a former
session, met during the day and submitted the following set of
resolutions for consideration by Conference:

(1) That in the future, immediately Conference assembles, com-
mittees be appointed to deal with sectional matters placed upon
the agenda paper.

(2) That this meeting of delegates representing country interests
[places] on record its disapproval of the running of tickets, and
that we believe the time has arrived to get back to an open
Conference.

(3) That we support the following motions on the agenda paper:
(a) That running of a ticket amongst the delegates to the ALP
Conference for election to any of the committee, official
positions, or as delegates to any other conference shall merit
the disqualification of the persons concerned, and that the
same principle shall apply to the government of leagues.

(b) That any person or persons guilty of running tickets or
combining to run a ticket to secure a position of the ALP
Executive, shall be disqualified from running for a selection
for any position in the Movement, and also be disqualified
from holding any position in the Movement for three years.

(4) That this Conference directs the Executive to arrange for the
country delegates to meet at 10.00 am on the day after
Conference opens, to discuss country business.

(5) Wheat Industry: That a thorough inquiry into all phases of the
wheat industry be at once carried into effect, such committee to
consist of a chairman, nominated by the Government, two
delegates nominated by the Conference, and two delegates representing accredited farmers, also that the whole personnel of the committee consist of bona-fide farmers.

(6) That the electoral provisions of the Local Government Act be amended to provide for adult suffrage in shire and municipal elections, and that all elections for shire and municipal councils be held on the last Saturday in January.

(7) That the following new section be added to Plank 2 (Effective Land Settlement): ‘The necessary legislation be introduced to abolish plural voting in co-operative companies handling primary production’.

(8) Export of Primary Products: That for the purpose of defeating the capitalistic exploiters of this country, who, for their personal benefit, would reduce the toiling consumer to the lowest depths of poverty, the export of Australian products be prohibited until all local needs are guaranteed. That there be no regard for the catch-cry of Conservatism known as “world’s parity”. And that the producer be allowed a reasonable profit, as based on local markets, assistance to be rendered by the State in securing the highest possible values for any exportable surplus.

**Objection to Pitt Street Farmers**

Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) moved: “That Conference adopt the report of the country committee”, and during a lengthy statement he dealt with many of the difficulties besetting farmers. Mr T Clear (Albury), in supporting the motion, said that at the present time the life of a share farmer was little better than slavery. Something should be done to get them out of that slavery. It was no good asking men to go on the land unless inducements were held out to them. He objected to ‘Pitt Street farmers’ coming along to Conference and claiming to know more about rural matters than the farmers themselves.

Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) moved, as an addendum to clause 2, the following: “That this Conference repudiates the running of tickets for any position at the Annual Conference, and further than any member or members found holding secret meetings for the purpose of organising a section or faction, be reported, and that they be not allowed to take his or her seat at Conference, and that such members be not eligible to hold office in the Movement”.

This was accepted, and became part of the motion.

Mr Allam (The Rock) supported the motion. While it was true the Labor Government had done more for the farmers in three weeks than the Nationalists had done in three years, the Labor Government would have to keep moving or it would lose the support of the farmers. Referring to the clause dealing with shire and municipal elections, he
moved as an addendum: “That all articles or letters in newspapers dealing with State, shire, or municipal elections after nominations are received be signed by the author”. This was agreed to, and became part of clause 5 of the motion.

Mr Mitchell (Hospital and Asylum Employees) and Mr AE Roberts (Elong Elong) also supported the motion. Mr Hutchinson (AWU) said that at the incoming session of Parliament the Labor Government should carry out the policy already laid down of placing a super-tax on all land adjacent to railways for the purpose of opening up the land, compelling it to be put to use, and making the railways a paying proposition instead of a losing proposition as at present. The motion was carried unanimously.

Minister for Agriculture Speaks

During the course of the evening Mr Dunn (Minister for Agriculture) dealt with agricultural matters at some length. He did not object to the motion, so far as it concerned his department. Referring to the suggestion to appoint a committee to go into the wheat industry, he thought this would be a very difficult matter to inquire into, but if it could bring forward some good recommendations nobody would welcome it more than himself. As wheat yields differed in various years, it was difficult to say what was a fair cost of production. One year’s cost might be quite different to that of another year. That was why the Labor Government had proposed, in estimating the cost of production, that it should be spread over a period of five years. The cost of production during the present year, because of the remarkably good harvest, would be around 5/- per bushel, but if it was reckoned over the lean years during the past five years it would be found that an average cost of 10/- per bushel would be nearer the mark. He believed in the farmer getting a fair return based on the cost of production plus a reasonable profit, and was quite prepared to make that the price to be paid.

Referring to the operations of the wheat pool, Mr Dunn said the present year’s pool had been the best ever. Had the pool not been established, the commercial interests would have got to work, and, taking advantage of the financial situation, forced the farmers to accept the prices they would have laid down. The farmers of New South Wales should realise that the Labor Government had saved them from disaster.

Critics Answered

As to the various criticisms levelled against the administration of the wheat pool, as far as New South Wales was concerned, he was always willing to remedy any defects in administration if they were pointed out to him. If anything was being done detrimental to the Labor policy the
matter was remedied as soon as his attention was drawn to it. The Labor Government had experienced many difficulties in financing the pool. While the banks fell over themselves to help other Governments, they showed no eagerness to come to the assistance of the Labor Government. In the few months the Labor Government had been in office it had saved the farmers and the country millions of pounds.

Mr Dunn said that under the present pool all possibilities of fraud or corruption were eliminated. The agents were compelled to sign stricter agreements than ever before. That was why they were carrying on a campaign of misrepresentation against the Government, the silos, wheat pool, and even the Minister for Agriculture himself.

Mr Dunn also dealt with the additional 2/6 per bushel guarantee, and said it had been responsible for the planting of 2,000,000 more acres of wheat than would have been planted had the guarantee not been given. He justified the sales of wheat to Germany, but denied the statements that wheat had been sold to that country at a price lower than that sold for consumption in Australia.

Day 10, Wednesday, 6 April 1921

Alderman Connelly’s Case

When Conference reassembled on Wednesday evening (April 6) Mr T Lavelle, MHR, presented the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the expulsion of Alderman Connelly, a member of the Waterloo Labor League, some time ago. The committee recommended that Alderman Connelly be re-admitted to the Movement. This recommendation was endorsed by Conference – the voting being 73 to 50.

Public Service Board

Mr Stuart-Robertson (Camperdown) secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved: “That in the opinion of Conference, the Public Service Board of New South Wales is merely an expensive encumbrance and should be abolished, and that its attitude in connection with certain inspectors appointed by the Attorney-General under the Profiteering Prevention Act is against the best interests of the Labor Movement”. Mr Stuart-Robertson claimed that the Board was doing no useful work. It should be abolished and a business board set up. Mr Mitchell (Hospital and Asylum Employees) thought that motion 152 on the agenda paper would meet the case and favoured that as an amendment. However, with Mr Stuart-Robertson’s consent, paragraph 2
of that motion was added as an addendum to the motion. The addendum read as follows: “The appointment of an independent appeal board for the whole of the Public Service, an independent chairman, a representative of the department, and one from the employees”.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Lunacy Administration

The President read a letter from Mr McGirr (Minister for Health) asking Conference to consider a motion carried on the previous Saturday relative to the case of Mrs Farr, who, it was alleged, was illegally detained in a mental asylum. He made certain suggestions as to how Mrs Farr’s case might be inquired into. Conference decided to appoint a committee of five to inquire into the case of Mrs Farr and the allegations of Dr Thompson into the workings of the Lunacy Act. Mesdames Dwyer and Gray, Miss Golding, and Messrs Kelly and Martin were appointed to the committee.

Manufacture of Armaments

Mr Singleton (North Sydney) submitted the following motion: “That all manufacture of armaments shall be the exclusive industry of the Commonwealth, thus eliminating the individuals who grow wealthy by the manufacture and sale of the implements of war, and with a view to bringing about a limitation of the manufacture of same”. The motion was carried unanimously after a short debate.

The debate on the question of re-admitting Mr RD Meagher and other conscriptionists to the Movement appears on another page of this issue.

(Separate report in the Australian Worker, 14 April 1921)

Expelled Conscriptionists. Motion for Re-Admission before ALP Conference. Decisive Rejection by Delegates.

There was a big gathering of delegates at the Labor Conference on Wednesday evening (April 6) to consider the question of re-admitting to the Labor Movement Mr RD Meagher and others who were expelled because of their attitude on the conscription issue.

Delegates left no doubt as to their feeling on the matter. When the motion and the two amendments having for their purpose the admission of the conscriptionists were put to the delegates the opinion was a decisive “No” roared from over a hundred voices. When president Lambert declared the motions lost, delegates jumped to their feet and
burst into wild cheering for several moments, showing in no unmistakable manner their opposition to the re-admission of traitors and renegades to the Labor Movement.

The first motion was moved by Mr Doyle, on behalf of the Belmore Labor League, and read as follows: “That in view of Mr Meagher’s support of the workers in the big strike of 1917, and the consistent support of Ald Meagher both in the Legislative Council and the Sydney Municipal Council of Labor principles, this League recommends to the next Labor Conference an amendment of Rule 2, so that any person excluded for supporting conscription and who since such exclusion has not joined any party hostile to Labor may be readmitted to the Movement with full continuity of membership”.

Mr Doyle claimed that Mr Meagher, along with Messrs A Griffith and A Gardiner, MLA, were in a different category to other conscriptionists, inasmuch as they had never joined any other political movement.

Objections to the Motion

Mr Gibbons took a point of order that it was incompetent for Conference to deal with the motion. The rules laid it down that any person who had opposed Labor candidates could not be readmitted to the Labor Movement. The President ruled that the motion was rightly before the Conference, and, if carried, it would amend the rule. Conference could make amendments to the rules if it so desired.

Mr Doyle (continuing) said that the Belmore Branch discussed the motion in the light of the past services rendered to the Labor Movement by Mr Meagher. Meagher was not on the same footing as Hughes and others. (Shouts of “Yes”) He claimed that Meagher had gone out of his way to help Labor in the 1917 strike.

Delegates: “To get limelight for himself”. Mr Doyle thought the Labor Movement should be prepared to hear and pass judgment on those men who came before them as penitents.

Delegates: We’d have had a second Ireland if Meagher and others had had their way. (Cheers)

Should They Be Always Debarred

Mr Stanton (St Leonards) said that he did not wish to glorify Meagher. It was a matter of dealing with the question in a broad way, not of dealing with individuals. The point was should the door be barred, bolted and locked for all time against men who were otherwise true to Labor, and who were prepared to be loyal to Labor in the future? (Shouts of “Yes) He claimed that motion 158 provided safeguards regarding the admission of such persons and moved it as an amendment.
Motion 158 was as follows: “Any person excluded for supporting conscription, who, since such exclusion has not joined any party hostile to Labor, may be readmitted to the Movement with continuity of membership on application made to and approved of by the ALP Executive”.

He claimed that the Movement was so big that it could not live by seclusion, but by those who supported its ideals. He did not think the door should be barred for all time. The Movement wanted men who could lend support.

**Spirited Opposition to Motion**

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, said that if the motion was carried it meant sticking a knife into the back of the Movement. (Cheers) He didn’t approach the matter in a personal spirit. Meagher and others had broken the Labor pledge and should be excluded for all time. (Cheers) After all, what great service had Meagher rendered to the Labor Movement? He only came into the Movement in 1911, when the going was good. Hughes and Holman had done far more for the Movement in the times when it was unpopular. But was there any talk of admitting them. (“No”) Then why all this cheap sentiment about Meagher? Meagher had opposed Labor men in the past, and had not always stuck for Labor since he was expelled. Didn’t he oppose Jack Doyle for Phillip? Didn’t he vote against the Labor nominee for Mayor? Didn’t he oppose Labor candidates at the municipal elections? If they were to readmit Meagher they were doing infinite harm to the Movement. Other men in the future, having tempting offers made to them to betray Labor, would say, “Well, I can take this, and if it fails I can crawl back into the Labor Movement”. (Cheers) The worst day’s work the Conference could do would be to admit the conscriptionists. (Cheers)

**“Keep the Movement Clean”**

Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) opposed the motion. These men were only trying to get back into the Labor Movement because it was again becoming popular. Meagher only came into the Movement when it was popular, and left it when he thought Labor was going down in the conscription issue. If his heart had been in the right place he would have stood by Labor through thick and thin. (Cheers) They could not get away from the fact that he and others were prepared to sell the Labor Movement in the conscription issue. Were they prepared to take those men back into the Movement again (“No”) where possibly they could do more harm in the future? He could understand an ignorant and unlearned man making a mistake, but men like Meagher were educated and knew what they were doing. That made their sin all the worse. They calmly, coolly, and deliberately set out to plot and sell the workers to the
capitalists and militarists of this country. He wanted to know if Meagher had made application for readmission. Had he? And to what leagues? To what persons? He wanted to know who they were so that they could place their finger on the people in the Movement who would be a party to readmitting rats, traitors, and renegades. (Cheers) He objected to delegates coming to Conference with such motions to play on the impulses of their fellow delegates. What guarantee had they that men like Meagher would not again sell them when faced with the bigger issue of Imperial Federation now looming on the horizon? They had cleaned the Movement by expelling the traitors, and never let it be said that they were prepared to pollute it with the presence of those men who in Labor’s darkest hours were prepared to sell the workers, body and soul to their enemies. (Cheers).

Mr Colbin (Petersham) moved the following further amendment: “In view of the fact that the Labor platform was silent on the question of conscription for oversea service, and that the same is now a dead-and-gone issue, this Conference hereby authorises the incoming Executive to readmit to the organisation those Labor men who, though expelled from the Movement on the conscription question, abstained from joining any hostile organisation and retained their union membership”.

A Returned Soldier’s Viewpoint

Digger Dunn opposed the motion, and told how the soldiers were misled over the conscription issue and coerced into voting for conscription. If they were prepared to let Meagher back into the Movement they would have to re-admit others. He would sooner see his right hand cut off than see the conscriptionists re-admitted again.

Mr Humphries supported the St Leonards amendment.

“Labor Must Keep Faith”

Mr J Power (AWU) in the course of a lengthy speech, said he regretted that such a motion had come before the Conference. If it was carried it would do a great deal of harm to the Movement. They were charged with the work of keeping the Movement clean and stable. It was not a question of individuals, but the Movement as a whole. If it went forth that they were prepared to readmit, in 1921, the men they expelled as traitors in 1916, what would the people of Australia who placed their trust in the Labor Movement think of them? Wouldn’t it shatter their belief in the ideals of Labor? It was dealing a staggering blow at their solidarity to even suggest that these men should be readmitted. The Movement laid down its policy in 1916, and any man who opposed it then was a traitor and a rat. (Cheers) These men had done that deliberately. The same trouble might arise again – even the greater issue
of Imperial Federation. Having tried to sell the Movement once, wouldn’t these renegades try to do so again? (“Yes”) It might even devolve on the votes of these men to decide the future policy of Labor on those great issues. What a nice position to be in. Had the Labor Movement sunk so low as to even give a moment’s consideration to such a motion? (“No”) What Labor did, in laying down the policy in 1916, it did deliberately. Those who opposed that policy then should be for ever excluded from the Movement. They were charged with the duty of keeping the Labor Movement clean and honest, and for God’s sake let them not betray that trust. (Cheers)

**Delegates Reject Motions**

The two amendments and the motion were unanimously rejected on the voices of delegates, great bursts of cheering punctuating the announcement by the President that the motion and amendments were lost.

**Day 11, Thursday, 7 April 1921**

**Concluding Session**

There was a poor attendance at Conference last Thursday night (April 7). Being the last session, business was transacted with greater speed than usual – most of the motions being carried on the voices with little or no discussion.

Mr Allam (The Rock) moved: “That the Executive take steps to amend the rules to provide for representation at Conference in accordance with the new electoral boundaries”. The motion was carried.

**The Breakaway Section**

Mr Singleton (North Sydney) moved the following motion dealing with the readmission of members who broke away at the 1919 Conference: “That the time has arrived in the interests of the Movement to hold out the olive branch to the breakaway section and they be asked to link up with the Movement again.”

The President ruled the motion out of order as being in conflict with rules 2 and 40. Mr Wheeler moved a motion of dissent, but the President refused to accept it. He added that it was open to any trade unionist or Labor man to join the Party so long as he complied with the rules of the organisation.
Workers’ Children Penalised

Mrs Dwyer moved: “That University fees be abolished”. She said that recently the University authorities had increased the fees, making it prohibitive for anyone not winning a scholarship to enter the University. West Australia had a free University and New South Wales should have the same. Mr Kelly (Newtown) supported the motion, and claimed that the sons of workers were excluded because of the higher fees. There was a suspicion that this had been done deliberately by the conservative element controlling the University. The motion was carried.

Mrs Dwyer moved: “That the qualifying examination be abolished and a certificate of general proficiency be awarded by school inspectors and headmasters”. She favoured a return to the old system of certificates by masters. The present system was farcical and not fair to the children. Mr Gibbons (Ashburnham) contended that it was often impossible to get a proper test of a child’s educative skill, owing to the nervousness of the surroundings and the fact that it was a tax on the child’s mind. The motion was carried.

Encouraging Australian Sentiment

Mr Allam (The Rock) moved: “That the Executive appoint a committee of educational experts to draft text papers and books for primary and secondary schools along lines of social and economic subjects”. He thought the time had come for something more modern in the school books instead of the present Imperialistic and jingo matter now being crammed into the heads of school children. Mr Kelly seconded the motion. It was nearly time they took control of the schools, and saw that the children were taught Australian sentiment and that the school books be made to conform with Australian ideals. Several other delegates expressed similar views. The motion was carried.

University Reform

Mrs Dwyer moved: “University Reform Bill – (1) That the University Amendment Act of 1912 be amended to provide the ages of students eligible for exhibitions shall be between the ages of 16 and 21, instead of 17 and 20, as at present; (2) that these exhibitions shall be awarded only to students whose parents or guardians are in receipt of an income of not more than £600 per annum; (3) that the number of exhibitions allotted to students from evening tutorial classes shall be increased from 5 to 10 per cent of the total number of exhibitions; (4) that these exhibitions shall cover all professional courses”. She claimed that many children of wealthy parents took exhibitions which rightly belonged to the children of working class parents, to the detriment of the latter. The Act would
need alteration, and she forecasted a great deal of opposition to this from the Upper House. The motion was seconded by Mrs Gray and carried.

Mrs Gibbons moved the following motion: “That the State Labor Party bring in an amendment of the Education Act to provide for the mandatory age for leaving school be sixteen years.

“That an Endowment Act be passed to provide an allowance in all families up to the age of sixteen years.

“That a Chair of Agriculture be established at the University, and that an amount of £30,000 be placed on the 1921-22 Estimates to provide the upkeep.”

After a short discussion the motion was carried with the addition of the following addendum to Clause 3, moved by Captain Toombs: “And that in all professional courses students may be allowed to take courses in broken periods”.

**Police Association and the Conference**

Mr Kelly (Newtown) on a matter of urgency, drew attention to the fact that following the appearance before Conference of members of the Police Association certain action was being taken which might penalise the delegates in question. On his suggestion the following motion was carried by Conference:

“That this Conference of the ALP gives its whole-hearted support and power in the matter of assisting the Police Association of New South Wales to obtain the necessary alteration to the Arbitration Act, so as to allow the association to register as an industrial organisation under such Act, and to obtain the full privileges of the Act. Further, that this Conference gives the association similar support to obtain a Police Appeals Board, to be constituted of a tribunal of three members as follows: an independent chairman, to be elected by the Government, after consultation with the Police Association; one member to be appointed by the Police Department; and one by the members of the Police Association.

“Further, that it be an instruction from this Conference to the Government to have the matter dealt with at an early date at the next session, and that the Chief Secretary (Mr Dooley) be asked to endorse the action of the police delegates who appeared before the Conference.”

**Lunacy Act Amendment**

Mr Mitchell (Hospital and Asylum Workers) moved the following motion: “That the Government be urged to amend the Lunacy Act of 1898 to permit the abolition of the office of Master-in-Lunacy and the position of Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals, and to provide for the Public Trustee administering the estates of mental patients and the Board or Commission administering the Department of Mental Hospitals”.

The motion was seconded by Mrs Gray, and carried on the voices.
Protest Against Slavery

Mr Mitchell also moved the following: “That the Government be advised that this Conference condemns the employment of inmate labor at any State Hospital other than those State hospitals especially established for the care and treatment of such inmates, and urges the Minister in charge of this department to take the necessary steps to secure the discontinuance of the objectionable practice”.

He said that at the Coast Hospital, Little Bay, there were 100 inmates from various asylums doing work at 1/- per day to the detriment of bona fide unionists. (Shame) This should be stopped. If they were debarred from doing this work, and it was given to bon-fide workers, some 50 or 60 men could be employed. He said the Government had no right to use these people at less than award rates. The motion was carried unanimously.

The following motion, moved by Mr Gibbons, seconded by Mr Mills, was carried without discussion: “That the Stamps Duty Tax of 1920 be amended to abolish duty stamps on pay dockets”.

Hours of Firemen

On the motion of Mr TJ Smith (Fire Brigades Employees’ Union) the following proposal was carried: “That it be an instruction to the Government to bring in a bill to provide a 44-hour week for employees engaged in all industries, including the members of the Fire Brigade”. Mr Smith pointed out that these men were liable for service for 138 hours per week. That was not fair. They were just as much entitled to a standard working week as other workers.

A National Policy Urged

Mr Amos (Waverley) moved that the following matter be sent along to the Federal Labor Party to be dealt with:

“That in order to secure for the people of Australia a more equal opportunity of obtaining their undoubted right to live in a high degree of comfort in this land of plenty, this Conference recommend the adoption by the Federal Labor Party of one comprehensive National Scheme, to provide for:

(a) The prohibition of export, except by license, of all raw and partially manufactured product used in the manufacture of the necessities of life, and the fixation of a standard home price for same, with a view of stabilising the cost of live.

(b) The fixation of a basic wage for a man and wife based on the stabilised cost of living.

(c) The maintenance of all children of the nation by a direct charge on the whole community by means of a graduated tax on all incomes.”

The motion was seconded by Mr Brotherson and carried.
Dealing with Drug Profiteers

Mr Mitchell moved the following motion, which was carried without discussion: “That the Wholesale Drug Depot, at present attached to the State Treasury Department, be transferred to the Health Department, and be extended so as to provide all drugs necessary for State hospitals as well as public hospitals, with a view to preventing private drug companies from making exorbitant profits from charitable institutions which cater for the sick and the suffering.”

On the motion moved by Mr Andrews, seconded by Mr Kelly, it was decided that Conference adjourn sine die, and that all business remaining on the agenda paper be referred to the Executive for consideration. A vote of thanks to the chairman, cheers for Labor, and the singing of “Solidarity for Ever” brought the Conference to a close.
CHAPTER 6
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 3 – 17 June 1922

Report in The Australian Worker

A great deal of time in the 1922 Conference was taken up once again with exposing divisions between the AWU and the parliamentary leadership. Premier James Dooley had led the party to defeat at the NSW election on 25 March 1922. This was taken as an opportunity for the AWU to try to ‘purify’ the Caucus. There was prolonged debate (featuring the AWU stooge in Caucus, Greg McGirr) over members of Caucus who had disagreed with McGirr – and thus with the AWU – over tactics involved in a Bill on the basic wage. Early in 1923 the AWU-dominated State Executive would expel Dooley from the party and impose McGirr as the new leader of Caucus. Debate at this Conference should have made clear how little support McGirr had in Caucus. This AWU attack on Caucus control of parliamentary affairs later served as a precedent for the opponents of the AWU to impose JT Lang as a leader immune from Caucus votes. Both sides of the factional war seemed to have lost touch with political reality.

The other major issue in 1922 was debate over the socialisation objective that had been approved by the Brisbane Conference of the Federal ALP. Even though this objective added very little of a ‘socialist’ character to the party, the issue had great symbolic importance separating moderates and radicals. The AWU was generally on the same side as Caucus on this issue, since an insistence on emphasising socialism and the wholesale nationalisation of industry had been one of the issues central to the collapse of the IVC in 1919. Moreover, in 1922, when anti-communism first became a central electoral issue in New South Wales, it was a matter that could cause great harm to the party.

An interesting debate took place in the final days of Conference over a suggestion that the ALP should abandon preselection of candidates for elections to Parliament. What was behind the debate was a general acceptance that the preselection machinery of the party was subject to corrupt manipulation, especially by the ruling AWU faction. Moreover, the preselection process in elections under Proportional Representation tended to give some candidates a priority over others and lead to divisive
public bickering between them. This would feature as a much more central issue in the Conference of the following year. The alternatives were that party members be permitted to contest freely against other party members, or that the Executive should choose the candidates. Delegates were likely to favour the latter course only if their faction controlled the Executive!

The previous Conference had agreed that there should be some change in the rules for selecting delegates to Conference, and had asked the Executive to suggest changes. Instead, the Executive ( favouring the interests of the AWU) had changed the rules on its own authority. On the face of it these were minor, affecting conditions for branch rather than union delegates, so that delegates were selected by Electorate Councils rather than directly by branches or leagues. However, since there were only 24 electorates in this period of Proportional Representation, virtually all were subject to stacking over the next few years in order to give advantage to one faction or the other. Electorates could send as many delegates to Conferences as they could elect MPs; thus the number of branch/SEC delegates was restricted to 90. The Women’s Committee had reason to complain that the WCOC had been downgraded. Many local branches declared ‘bogus’ by the Executive – thus denying them access to the Electorate Councils – were reinstated by the Federal Executive before the next Conference. Although there were complaints about Executive control over the rules from the floor in this Conference, the meeting neither confirmed nor repudiated the action of the Executive – thus leaving it in control. The rule change in 1917 (giving one delegate to Conference for each 1000 members in any trade union) had already given enormous advantages to the AWU, and this attempt by the Executive to extend its control over Conference excited great suspicion from opponents of the AWU. It was one of the issues – along with attempts to control Caucus – that led to intervention by the Federal Executive before the next Conference. The issue of rules for selecting delegates would feature in most Conferences in the next few years – until it was settled for the Lang era by the ‘Red Rules’ of 1926 that were designed to sideline the AWU.

Discussion on the socialisation objective and the McGirr controversy took up so much time that almost none of the motions on the detailed business paper could be addressed before Conference petered out for lack of a quorum.
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1921

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Ladies and Gentlemen,
The 31st Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is herewith submitted for your consideration.

New Branches
During the year new Branches have been formed and old Branches have been resuscitated at the following centres:

South Lidcombe, Undercliffe, Gundagai, Northbridge, Lake Cargellico, Hume Reservoir, Oberon, Coraki, Braidwood, Yenda, Surry Hills (women), Coramba, Canowindra, Martin’s Creek, Hillston, Kensington, Linburn, Woy Woy, Gloucester, Waterfall Sanatorium, Wee Waa, Carrington, Lambton, Nambucca Heads, Gunnedah, Oaklands, St Peters, Urana, Boolaroo, Gerringing, Newlands, Thirroul, Rose Bay, McDonaldtown, Nelligan, Langlea, Guildford, Nyngan, Leeton, Jingelllic, Croydon, Geurie, Lidcombe, Girriween, Sutherland, Clovelly, Hunter’s Hill, Werris Creek, Lavington, Harden, Manilla, Westmead, Marulan, Summer Hill, Dora Creek, Lambton, Lyndhurst, Cronulla, Murrurundi, Leichhardt West, Ulmarra, Sylvania, Manildra, North Auburn, Darlington, Walgett, Morgriguy, North Ryde, Blayney.

The following Unions have also affiliated under Rule 18 and Rule 6: Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association (Coast District), Dental Mechanics’ Union.

Executive Meetings
During the year the Executive have held 42 meetings. The personnel of the Executive altered in consequence of members nominating for selection for member of Parliament and having to resign in accordance with the rules, alternate members taking their place.

Deaths of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
During the year Labor in the Commonwealth has suffered very severe losses by the sad deaths of Mr F Tudor, MHR, Leader, and Mr TJ Ryan, MHR, Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, and Mr Page, MHR, Maranoa, and the Hon J Storey, Premier of New South Wales, and Mr W Kearsley, MLA.

The sad news was received with profound regret throughout the Commonwealth and the Labor Movement, to the advancement of which they had dedicated their lives. Their never-failing energy, their broad
outlook and the dominant personality of our late leaders constitute an irreparable loss to the Labor Movement.

**West Sydney Vacancy**

The vacancy caused by the death of Mr TJ Ryan was filled by the election of Mr WH Lambert, late Lord Mayor of Sydney and President of the ALP, whose selection by the workers of West Sydney was a fitting reward for long years of unselfish devotion to their cause.

The election of Mr WH Lambert as representative for West Sydney in the Federal Parliament necessitated his resignation, in accordance with the rules, from the Presidency of the ALP. The Senior Vice-President (Mr JM Power) was elected to fill the position for the balance of the year.

**Balmain and Newcastle Vacancy**

The vacancies caused by the deaths of the Hon. the Premier (the late Mr John Storey) and Mr W Kearsley, MLA, were filled by the appointment of Mr T Keegan and Mr D Murray, the next highest Labor candidates at the elections in 1920, in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act.

**Appointments to the Legislative Council**

The Labor Government made sixteen new appointments to the Upper House, four members of the Executive (namely, Messrs Power, Coates, Smith and Higgins) being among the number. The question was raised that members of the Executive, having been appointed to the Upper House, came within the purview of Rule 27 – “The seat on the Executive of any member thereof nominating for selection for Parliament, Federal or State, shall at once automatically become vacant”. In answer to this question it was pointed out that Conference had accepted the ruling laid down that Rule 27 did not apply to members of the Legislative Council or Aldermen of the Municipal Councils, therefore the members of the Executive so appointed have retained their seats on the Executive, and Conference is the proper body to determine whether they shall continue or otherwise.

**Disintegrating Influences**

The Executive elected by the 1921 Annual Conference were called on to prevent and stamp out certain efforts that were being engineered to disintegrate the Party, and the formation of the Propagandists and Organisers’ Union by Mr JH Catts, MHR, was the culminating point which compelled the Executive, in the interests of the Movement, to declare that all persons associated with this so-called Union were, some of them innocently enough, actually acting the part of scabs on the Labor Movement, and called on them to disband forthwith. The action of the Executive resulted in the P & O Union disbanding, but the disintegrating
tactics of its founder were continued, and his influence was responsible for much confusion in the elections recently held.

**Political Crisis**

The Government, holding office as they were by the slender majority of one on the floor of the House, were precipitated into crisis by the action of Mr Levy, Speaker, in resigning from the Chair.

The Labor Government resigned office, and Sir George Fuller was sent for and formed a Government, which was sworn in and lasted seven hours.

Mr Dooley was again sent for and commissioned to form a Government, Mr Levy being elected Speaker. The state of parties was the same as before. Apparently the conditions under which Mr Dooley was commissioned to form a Government were that an early appeal to the people should be made.

Every effort was made by the Executive to safeguard the interests of the rank and file of the Movement and to secure the right to hold selection ballots.

Special meetings of the Executive were held, at which Mr J Dooley, the Leader of the Party, attended, and stated that he would be unable to secure any further prorogation of Parliament, that the latest date on which Parliament would be dissolved would be the middle of January, that the writs would be issued about February 8, and polling take place about one month following.

In view of the position set out by the Leader the following resolution was adopted by the Executive:

“That the Secretary be directed to inform Electorate Councils and Branches, or where no Council exists the Leagues in the area, that, providing they intimate to this Executive on or before Wednesday, 18th instant that they will arrange to complete the selection of candidates by Saturday, January 28th, 1922, local selections may be conducted, and to permit of this being done all time limits set out in Rule 44 and the required advertisements in Labor News or The Worker be dispensed with.

“Where Electorate Councils and Electorate Branches do not comply with the foregoing, all selections in such electorates be made by the Executive, but that it be made known that eligible members nominated by such Councils or Branches will receive Executive consideration.”

Without a doubt the Labor Movement was caught on the hop. Electorate Councils in many electorates had allowed themselves to become moribund, and in some cases had gone out of existence, and the Executive had to proceed in accordance with the resolution adopted to select the candidates for the following electorates: Byron, Oxley, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Wollondilly, Sturt, Goulburn, and Northern Tablelands.

Acting on the recommendation of the Organising Committee, who had carefully considered the best methods for polling the highest Labor
vote, the Executive adopted the system of only running as many effective candidates as there was a chance of winning with, and decided to regiment the vote and to divide the electorates into at many districts as there were effective candidates, each candidate to get No.1 vote in the district allotted.

The selfishness of the individual candidates defeated this object, and several candidates, who had previously agreed to accept the conditions, rebelled, and organised for themselves instead of the Movement. In consequence of Mr WJ Ratcliffe refusing to abide by the decision he had previously agreed to, the Executive were compelled to withdraw his endorsement as a Labor candidate. By persisting in his defiance of the regulations laid down he automatically placed himself in the category of a scab and outside the Labor Movement.

The result of the introduction into the campaign of the sectarian issue in a form more virulent and bitter than on any previous occasion, the publication of a Protestant manifesto alleged to be issued by Working Men’s Councils, but which, on the face of it, showed the handiwork of some person whose acquaintance with the inner working of the administration of the ALP was apparent, was a primary cause of our defeat.

The date of polling day was set down for March 25, and the result was a severe setback to the Movement. The Government went to the country with a following of 45 members and came back with the loss of the following members: JW Doyle (Balmain), T Cleary (Wollondilly), J Clarke (Wammerawa), M Burke (Sydney), CW Johnston (Bathurst), W Ely (Parramatta) and in a House of 90 members we have a following of 35 pledged Labor men.

Expulsion of Mr JH Catts, MHR

On Sunday, 2nd April, 1922, Mr JH Catts, who, in conjunction with a committee appointed by the Executive and the State Parliamentary Labor Party, acted as Campaign Director, published in the columns of the *Sunday Times* a malicious and false indictment of the Executive, and made charges of a serious character reflecting on the integrity of the President, General Secretary, and other members of the ALP.

The Executive was called together to review the article in question, and discussed it for several hours. Mr Catts asked for an adjournment of the discussion in order to enable him to prepare his defence. This was granted, and the Executive met again on Friday, 7th April, when Mr Catts, after nearly two hours’ address, failed to justify his statement. Every consideration and every opportunity was given Mr Catts to justify his actions, but after two hours in which neither Mr Catts nor his friends made any attempt at justification, the Executive, by 18 votes to 13, carried a resolution expelling Mr Catts from the Labor Movement. If any justification for this step were needed the celerity with which Mr Catts announced the formation of a renegade party is the answer.
Municipal

During the year the Sydney Municipal Elections were held, and resulted in the Conservative and reactionary elements in the City again securing control of the City Council, the workers of which are in for a very bad time. The concessions obtained for them through the efforts of the Labor aldermen are in a very fair way of disappearing, and the abolition of the 44-hour week, together with a reduction in wages, is contemplated.

Finances

We commenced the year 1921 with a balance in bank of £21/3/3 and with liabilities amounting to over £1000. During the year we ran several carnivals, and raised over £2000 by this means, which enabled us to clear off all the old outstanding accounts.

Art Union

The Art Union was again conducted by ex-Senator Macdougall, but, unfortunately, it has not turned out the success anticipated, and instead of assisting to swell the Library Fund it shows a loss on this year’s efforts of about £70. Metropolitan Branches have not pushed it with the same vim as last year, and the receipts from this source are several hundreds of pounds less than in 1921.

Labor News

During the year Labor News has been reorganised. Mr JF Higgins, MLC, resigned from the management. Mr WA Gibbs, Assistant Secretary, was appointed to act as Manager, with Mr W Ennis as Editor. It is anticipated that under the new management Labor News will increase its popularity and continue to spread the gospel of Labor’s broad humanitarian principles into centres where same have not previously reached.

In Conclusion

The General Secretary desires to thank the President and Executive members for their unfailing courtesy and unfailing attention given to the many problems that have been placed before them from time to time. The sincere regard of members for the best interests of the Movement has resulted in a harmony of discussion which has greatly facilitated the consideration of the numberless matters submitted during the year for the Executive’s decision.

W Carey, General Secretary.
Federal Parliamentary Labor Party's Report

During the past year the Federal Party have had irreparable losses. First, the Hon. James Page, late member for Maranoa; then the Hon. TJ Ryan, Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives; and still again last January, when our trusted Leader (the Hon. Frank Tudor) passed away. All three men have played a big part in our Movement, and when taken from us were carrying Labor's banner with honor to the Movement. All three men had great capacity and application, and their wise advice and help are greatly missed in our counsels. The tragedy of this great loss to the Labor Movement is that all three comrades were in the prime of their lives, and had they been spared would have rendered great service to the Movement for many years to come.

The Federal Labor Party have been fully alive to questions of international importance, and every movement has been watched, especially that which was likely to affect Australia. When the Prime Minister (WM Hughes) arrived back from the imperial Conference it was clearly seen that, so far as the Commonwealth Government was concerned, that we would take no part in the Washington Conference. The Conference was referred to slightly, if not sneeringly, by the Prime Minister. As Australia is seriously involved by the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, the Pacific problems, and disarmament generally, the Federal Labor Party immediately brought pressure to bear in the House upon the Government. This resulted in a delegate being sent. While the delegate (then Minister for Defence, GF Pearce) is far from representing the views of the Federal Labor Party, the decision to send him could not be altered. Even though Australia was represented by one who has completely lost the confidence of the Australian Labor Movement, it is better to have that representation than none at all.

Alteration of Constitution

The Constitution Alteration Convention Bill, promised by the Nationalists at the last elections, made its tardy appearance during the last session, and not even its sponsor could do other than apologise for it. The Bill is a grotesque travesty, and one cannot but help feel that, owing to the campaign started against the Convention by the Federal Labor Party, the Bill was purposely drafted to ensure that it would not go farther than the second reading stage. The measure was stillborn, and the corpse is another addition to the many promises made by the Nationalist Government which have not been carried out. The Federal Labor Party regard the proposal to elect a Convention as a gross waste of time and money. There is no better body to make alterations of the Constitution than those who are working under the Constitution in the Commonwealth Parliaments. Even though a Convention were elected and sat, at a cost of anything up to £250,000, their decision would then be reviewed by the Parliament, and then sent to the people by referendum. To save time and...
money the Federal Party consider that it would be more satisfactory for the
Commonwealth Parliaments to make the alterations.

The greater portion of the session was taken up in dealing with the Tariff, and, notwithstanding that we failed to incorporate the provisions of our Platform, viz., New Protection, the Party, with rare exceptions, voted for the higher duties. The Tariff, even in its present unfinished form, will go towards establishing new industries in Australia, and will strengthen those already established. The Party endeavored unsuccess-
fully to make provision for the protection of not only the manufacturer but also the worker and consumer, but failed on Party votes.

**Geneva Conference**

When it was learned that a clerk from Australia House had been appointed by the Government to represent the Commonwealth on the Geneva Conference the Party immediately objected, and, mainly owing to the feeling created, the Government then reluctantly appointed Mr Bruce to also go to the Conference.

**Defence Act Amendment**

One of the most serious attempts to shackle Australia with the European brand of militarism was made by the National Government during the year. The British Army Act, with all its obsolete and middle-age cruelty, was tacked on to the Australian Act, but owing again to the very fine work done by Senator Gardiner, and continued by the Party, this measure was discreetly dropped. If it ever appears, the British Army Act provisions are hardly likely to again be incorporated.

**Defence Estimates Reduction**

The Federal Party consider that now the war is over that much of the money that is being spent is wasted. Accordingly an attempt was made to curb the squandering of millions of pounds. The Party considers that while the people of the world are groaning under the burden of taxation owing to the war that this load should not be further increased. We were successful in making large reductions in the Estimates, and by so doing prevented the 70 days’ camp so fondly desired by the Government and Military Junta.

Other matters, such as Arbitration (when we were successful in getting more Judges appointed), Shipping, Federal Capital, Repatriation, War Service Homes, Old Age, Invalid and Soldiers’ Pensions, Workmen’s Compensation, also received the attention of the Party, and every possible advantage was taken to propagate the principles of the Labor Party when dealing with those matters.

Yours fraternally,
Arthur Blakeley, Secretary Federal Parliamentary
**Municipal Labor Party's Annual Report**

For its daring and malicious misrepresentation the Sydney press has earned a reputation equal to the most selfish and conservative newspapers throughout the Empire. Labor’s administration during 1921 has received unfair and bitter criticism.

Lord Mayor Lambert was specially singled out for those brutal and unwarranted attacks, but notwithstanding the abuse and discredit hurled at him he calmly and fearlessly carried through Labor’s ideals and policy to the entire satisfaction of his Party.

Labor reforms have been considered and where possible successfully dealt with.

The absorption by the City of the Municipality of Paddington was considered to be the initial step towards Greater Sydney. Unfortunately, however, a small minority of Labor’s representatives in the Paddington Council were successful in preventing the amalgamation. Had the combined efforts of each party been unanimous there is no doubt a number of municipalities contiguous to the City would have invited similar consideration. The time is now opportune for Legislative enactment on Greater Sydney.

Increases in the basic wage have been made to all female employees in the service.

Preference to Unionists when hiring the Town Hall by any firm, institution, or company requiring the Town Hall for any function where the services of ushers, attendants, etc., were essential in addition to the attendants in the employ of the Council.

**Admission of Press to Committee Meetings**

The daily press, in its malicious method of wilful misrepresentation, distorted the reports of Committees to such an unwarranted extent that the Party decided to exclude the press from all Committee meetings. Although this appears to be a drastic step, it is nevertheless the practice adopted by every municipality of importance throughout the world.

**Sydney Corporation Amending Act**

The Sydney Corporation Act is antiquated and obsolete. Its powers are extremely narrow and limited – more so than most of the second-rate municipalities. The necessity for amending same and giving the city something reasonable has been brought under the notice of different Governments. Early in 1920 a deputation representative of the City Council waited upon the Government requesting certain amendments. Again on two occasions in 1921 similar requests were made. Finally Government sanction was granted and a bill was hurriedly drafted and rushed through Parliament on the eve of the municipal elections, but it met its fate at the hands of the Upper House. While regretting the defeat
of this Amending Act, I trust the Movement will keep the Government awake to the democratic principles involved and urge it to recommit the measure at the earliest opportunity.

**Acquisition of Metal Quarry**

The time and attention of the Party has been occupied during the past two years to the consideration of the purchase of a suitable metal property. Negotiations are still proceeding. Blue metal is used extensively but supplies are spasmodic, and often curtailed, causing inconvenience and delay in carrying on works. Therefore Labor in the City Council, like suburban councils, is anxious to control its own supplies.

**Timber, Wood Poles and Wood Blocks**

The use of these is prohibitive on account of the price, the latter having increased during recent years from £5/10/- per 1000 to £25 per 1000. Wood poles are in great demand for electric light extensions. Several thousands are used annually. The price per pole ranges from £4/10/- to £10 each.

The price of electricity was the only commodity not increased during the war period. Despite the increased cost of coal and machinery, electric current was generated and sold by the Council at a profit until the year ending 1920. This undertaking in 1921, owing to extra heavy charges, began to show a loss of £4000 per month. This loss caused the Council to approach the Government requesting permission to increase the price of electricity to consumers outside the City area. (Although the Council could increase the price in the City without an appeal to the Court, it was only just and equitable that all consumers should equally share the increases.) After a delay of some months the Government passed the necessary legislation for a Commission of Inquiry into the increased cost of generating electricity, giving full power to the Commissioner to recommend and adjust such increases (if any). Mr Justice Wade held an exhaustive inquiry and finally recommended an increase of five-tenths of a penny on light and three-tenths of a penny on power per unit. An increase sufficient to meet the department’s obligations was imposed.

Notwithstanding the necessity for those increases the department will in the year 1923 be in a position to considerably reduce the price of electricity. The reason for such reductions will be due to the modern machinery installed, and about to be installed, under Labor’s administration. Although Labor has been defeated in the elections it should not be forgotten that the City Council’s electricity undertaking has been placed on a sound commercial basis. This will be most apparent when the winter load of 1923 is tested.
Coal is an important item in the generation of electricity. It is estimated that 120,000 tons of coal will be consumed during 1922. Contracts have been accepted for Western coal at 26/- per ton and Northern Extended coal at 27/5 per ton. These prices make one realise the necessity for the Council owning its own mine and generating electricity on the coalfield. Negotiations are proceeding for the purchase of a coal mine with quantity and quality of coal, also suitable area for new power house.

The electrical undertaking has received the Party’s close attention. Early in 1921 an official inspection of the Power House was made. That visit revealed the shocking conditions under which the men had to work. Those conditions have since received attention. The machinery was inspected and found to be obsolete and efficient, with no prospects of supplying the future demands for current. The Party decided to encourage the Chief Electric Engineer to push along with recommendations for modern machinery to cope with all demands. Immediate action was necessary, as later events proved, when during the winter months of 1920 and 1921 restrictions on the supply of current had to be imposed, seriously inconveniencing many people in business and private life.

The following schedule will give some idea of Labor’s active administration in that Department during 1919-1920 and 1921, together with the commitments entered into until the year ending 1923:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mains</th>
<th>Substation</th>
<th>Buildings</th>
<th>Power House Plant</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>108,313</td>
<td>63,362</td>
<td>86,196</td>
<td>298,939</td>
<td>23,907</td>
<td>580,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>189,908</td>
<td>90,664</td>
<td>15,732</td>
<td>36,356</td>
<td>66,268</td>
<td>398,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>262,487</td>
<td>57,171</td>
<td>43,978</td>
<td>373,718</td>
<td>28,823</td>
<td>766,177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grand Total for the three years* 1,745,822

Estimated Capital Expenditure, 1922 and 1923

[A complicated table of estimates can be found in the original, but is not reproduced here]

The City Council elections were held on December 2 last, when the Municipal Labor Party was defeated. It needs little investigation to trace the reason for such defeat. The apathy of the workers enrolled assisted materially, while the police collecting the roll were conspicuous for neglect and carelessness. Superior organisation by the Civic Reform Party, together with unlimited funds and voluntary workers and motor-cars, brought about this result. We had the City Commercial Princes, down to the City Vegetable Markets Forestaller or Agent, working from 8
o’clock in the morning until the poll closed, to defeat Labor, and they succeeded beyond their expectation.

The municipal franchise requires immediate alteration. Adult franchise is the only democratic means of giving the people proper representation in the City Council. It remains for the Labor Government to provide this reform.

I trust your Executive will note this Plank of Labor’s Platform, and urge the Government to make special and immediate provision for adult enfranchisement.

Yours fraternally,
W. Holdsworth, Hon. Secretary, Municipal Labor Party

Annual Report of Women’s Central Organising Committee

For the year ending 31st December, 1921 the WCOC of the ALP have held their usual fortnightly meetings.

With regard to actual work done the WCOC can well lay claim to the fact that they have not relaxed in their efforts, notwithstanding that a Labor Government is in power, to see that they have done their very best in helping the Government, and especially its Ministers, by bringing before them, by means of deputations and correspondence, many vital necessities affecting the welfare of the State in general.

Great disappointment was exhibited by to WCOC over the Labor Government not being able to place upon the Statute-book the great Motherhood Endowment Bill, which is of paramount importance to the women and children of this State. We realise that the failure to pass this bill is not the fault of the Minister in charge nor the Labor Party, but we attribute it to the fact that the Government had to rely on the support of a slender majority of members, and to the fact that the Speaker stepped down from the Chair when this bill was about to become a reality.

The WCOC of the ALP have during the past twelve months taken an active part in bringing before Unions and Government Departments various irregularities committed by employers of labor, more particularly breaches of awards. In one instance we had it brought under the notice of the Department of a certain knitting factory where girls were fined sixpence for the frivolous offence of speaking to each other while at work.

During the year there have been two Federal by-elections, and the fight to see who was to retain control of the Sydney Municipal Council. The Labor Party was successful in retaining West Sydney, but was defeated at the municipal polls. The WCOC had its members working in these elections, but owing to the lack of funds we were unable to do the work that the National Party did, who, in their endeavors to win, spent thousands and thousands of pounds. It is absolutely essential that the Labor Party should pay special attention to the financial aspect if they
can hope to again win at the municipal polls. Many efforts were made during the year to raise funds for political purposes, but we are sorry to say very little money resulted. We are preparing for a huge Easter carnival with a most attractive programme, and we hope by this means to raise enough finance to at least pay a goodly share for the expense that will be necessary in the coming State elections.

In reference to propaganda and organising work done by my Committee, I wish to say that we have always done our very best to see that Leagues and Unions are kept in constant touch with the WCOC, and matters of importance, such as requesting Leagues to hold social evenings to raise finance, and asking their members to do their best in regard to placing people on the roll, holding meetings, etc. Interest is displayed by Leagues and Unions by sending along delegates, and as the OC now consists of a membership of between three and four hundred it goes to show the WCOC is wide awake.

Many of our women have been created JPs, and we are hoping on the next return of our Party to see many of our good, solid Labor women adorn the benches of the Legislative Council, also the Assembly.

We deeply regret the demise of our beloved and respected Leader, Mr John Storey. His last letter to the WCOC of the ALP expressed his intention to arrange for the appointment to the Council of good Labor women. However, we must trust that the present Leader will carry out our late respected Leader’s intentions with regard to the recognition of our Labor women’s services to the Labor Movement.

The year has been a disastrous one for our many Labor representatives. Labor has suffered at the hands of death. It has lost many stalwart Laborites, including among them Mr John Storey, Mr TJ Ryan, Mr Con Wallace, Mr W Kearsley, Mr J Fingleton, and Mr P Brookfield. We regret also to mention the untimely end of Mrs Kermonde and Miss Stone. Even as I write I regret to hear of the untimely end of Mr Frank Tudor, our respected Leader in the Federal House.

The annual election of officers for the coming year resulted: President, Mrs G Melville; Vice-Presidents, Miss A Sorenson, Mesdames Fox, Gorman, Scott; Treasurer, Miss S Mitchell; Secretary, Mrs GC Bodkin; Assistant Secretary, Mrs Maincke; Executive Committee, Mesdames Humphreys, Frome, Russell, Ratcliff, Misses Scott, Mitchell, Moore, Malley.

Yours in unity,
(Mrs) Ellen Bodkin, Hon. Secretary.

[Balance Sheet of NSW ALP not reproduced here. It can be found in the ML collection.]
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1922
(The Worker, 7, 14, 21 June 1922)

Day 1, Saturday, 3 June 1922

Spirited Discussion on Executive’s Report

President’s Address
The Annual Conference of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party was commenced last Saturday afternoon at the Trades Hall, Sydney. A pleasing feature of the opening session was the record attendance of delegates, there being 220 present. This was an indication that, whatever may have been said in the capitalist press, Labor has lost none of its old-time enthusiasm.

In declaring the Conference open for business, the President (Mr JM Power) referred to the losses sustained by Labor since the last Conference, both in Federal and State spheres. Delegates honoured the memories of deceased comrades by standing for a few moments.

Sympathy was also expressed for the Labor Leader (Mr Dooley), who recently sustained a painful injury. Mr Power said he was hopeful that Mr Dooley would be able to attend Conference before it concluded its sittings.

The standing orders having been adopted, Mr C Last was appointed minute secretary and Mr CE Roberts as timekeeper. Messrs G Buckland, J Bailey, MLA, JM Baddeley, MLA, J Tyrrell, and Mrs Dwyer were appointed to the Agenda Committee, and the Credentials Committee as appointed by the Executive was endorsed.

On the question of admitting the press, it was decided that only the Labor Press should be admitted, and that reports should be handed to the daily press at the conclusion of each session. It was further decided that only supporters of the Movement vouched for by delegate should be admitted to the public gallery.

The Knighting of Barwell
Mr G Gibbons (Murrumbidgee Electorate Council) secured the suspension of the standing orders, and moved: “That this Conference,
representing the democratic thought of the State, enters an emphatic protest against the knighting of Premier Barwell, the leading black labor advocate of Australia, as such action must tend to create general social disruption.” Mr Gibbons said that Barwell had led the agitation to introduce black labor into Australia. They were entitled to ask what was the influence that induced the British authorities to hand out a title to this man. Barwell was devoting his efforts to break down wages and the working conditions of the workers in Australia and introduce a coolie standard, and for this he was given a title. There was no doubt that the big interests in the Commonwealth were behind Barwell in his black labor campaign. It would be interesting to note who recommended him for a title. There was a feeling that the recommendation was made by highly-placed politicians in the Federal Parliament. The knighting of Barwell was an insult to Australian sentiment. British folk knew that the Australian people were solidly behind the White Australia policy, yet here was a title handed out to a man trying to break down that policy. There was little doubt that Barwell was acting in collusion with the Imperialists to further the black labor doctrine.

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA (Newcastle), said that the Labor Party should lay it down definitely that it was opposed to all such distinctions. He suggested that this should become an addendum to the motion. This was agreed to. Mr E Riley, MHR, asked that the names of other persons who received titles should be included in the motion. Mr Gibbons said he was against all titles, but he thought Barwell’s case called for special mention. Mr J Lynch (Railway Industry Branch of the AWU) thought there was plenty of other business to do without bothering about Barwell. They could not interfere in the matter, so why waste time. Several delegates referred to the titles recommended by the Storey Labor Government. Finally the motion, with the addendum added, was carried.

Representation at Conference

Miss Johnston (Marrickville) moved, Mrs Stone (Botany) seconded: “That the members of the Marrickville ALP enter their emphatic protest against the Executive in their endeavour to curtail the women’s representation at the coming Conference and that we stand for equal rights with men.”

The President thought that perhaps a statement by himself on the matter would clear the air. A motion had been adopted by last Conference instructing the Executive to provide for representation under the new electoral system, and the Executive had only carried out the wishes of the Conference. If delegates were opposed to the new system of representation then they should not have instructed the Executive to provide for it. However, he did not think it had affected the representation at Conference. There were just as many delegates present at this Conference as at the last. He thought, too, that there had been no
curtailment in the representation of women delegates. Opponents of the Labor Movement (notably Mr Catts) had said that the Executive had desired to hamstring the Conference, but if they looked at rule 20 they would see that nothing of the kind had been done. In fact, under the new system the country Leagues had a better representation than they had under the old system. There was never any suggestion in the minds of Executive officers to restrict the number of women delegates.

**Executive’s Action Questioned**

Mr Roberts (Storemen and Packers) thought the idea at last Conference was that the Executive would make certain recommendations which would be adopted at this Conference; not that the Executive should carry out the work itself. He raised the question of the absence of delegates from the Sydney and Balmain electorates.

The President said that Sydney was not represented because the fees had not been paid, and Balmain’s position was being discussed by the Credentials Committee.

Mrs Fowler (Botany) was opposed to the motion. Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that the Balmain delegates claimed that the Executive had exceeded its powers and because of that had decided to elect delegates on the old basis. His idea was that the resolution carried at last Conference meant that the matter would be dealt with by the present Conference. He did not think the Executive had any power to take the matter into its own hands and he protested against the Executive filching from Conference the right to amend the constitution. It was because of this that Balmain refused to accept the ruling of the Executive and why the delegates were not present.

At this stage, it was decided to incorporate another motion from the Marrickville Branch, as the discussion was a general one. This motion read: "This League protests against the Executive in the attempt to curtail the representation to Conference."

Mr V Molesworth, MLA, said that the representation at Conference showed that the alteration in the method of representation did not matter much. Mr TJ Smith (Sydney) hoped that the Executive would give back to women the same representation as they had previously. Mr E O’Dea (Shop Assistants) opposed the motion. He claimed that it was unfair to give small Leagues the same representation as Unions ten times as large. After further discussion the two motions were defeated.

**The President’s Address**

At the evening session, the President (Mr Power) delivered his address to delegates. He expressed pleasure at seeing an almost 100 per cent attendance. That was sufficient answer to Labor’s enemies that enthusiasm in
the Movement was dying. He thought that the present Conference would compare favourably with any of its predecessors. It was his first appearance before delegates as President of the Movement, and he was keenly conscious of the great honour thrust upon him. He made a graceful reference to Mr Lambert’s long occupancy of the Presidential chair.

He wanted to tell delegates that they met as equals. There were no “superior persons” in the Labor Movement. Delegates should not be afraid to speak their minds at Conference – it was the place where all differences should be thrashed out. Let them be frank with one another on the floor of Conference, and not resort to whispering outside to the enemies of Labor. The Movement was above the feelings and considerations of individuals, and whatever they did let it be for the good of the Movement as a whole.

**Upper House Appointments**

At the last Conference there was a feeling that the Executive should be supported in insisting that the Government take steps to advance Labor’s programme. The first essential was the removal of the Upper House. Conference stated very clearly that under no pretext would it allow the Party to hold office unless that matter was tackled. A certain procedure was laid down. It was followed, with the result that 16 accredited supporters of Labor were elected to the Upper House.

The President referred to a point that had been raised that members of the Executive on being elected to the Upper House should have resigned from the Executive. The last Conference laid it down very distinctly that members elected to the Upper House were not in the same position as members elected to the Assembly and that it was not necessary for them to resign. Nobody took exception to that rule at the time. As far as he was personally concerned, he was prepared to resign from the Upper House and the Presidential chair at a moment’s notice if Conference wished it.

**Disruptive Elements Routed**

Mr Power went on to refer to the quarrels that were a marked feature of the last Conference. Happily they had now subsided. They were today a perfectly harmonious gathering. The disruptive elements had been got rid of. (Applause) Touching the formation of the P and O Organisation, he said it was an unfortunate incident in the life of the Labor Movement, but it was closed now, and closed for ever. The Executive acted, and acted swiftly, in the matter. He thought the right thing had been done, and members of the Labor Movement had loyally accepted the decision of the Executive. He was sure that most of the members who had joined
it never realised it was loaded in the way it was, and they got out while the going was good. Good luck to them!

**The Brisbane Conference**

In October, continued Mr Power, one of the most momentous events in the history of the Labor Movement took place - the Brisbane Conference. He referred at length to the circumstances which led up to the calling of that Conference. At the time the All-Australia Trade Union Conference was held, he claimed it was establishing a dangerous precedent. For an outside body to adopt a political policy which was in turn adopted by the ALP provided those people who were decrying the efficiency of the ALP with the very material they needed. Here, they could say, was proof that the ALP was not able to function of itself. He maintained that if the Trades Unions wished to reconstruct the Labor Movement they could have done it within the ranks of the Movement, without calling an outside conference. It was creating a dangerous precedent. It was playing with fire, and could do no good.

The decisions arrived at by the All-Australia TU Congress were sent along to the Brisbane Conference, where they were adopted. The principal one was the new objective. The old objective had stood for 20 years without alteration, and he claimed that everything the workers wanted was contained in the old objective.

"An Abstract Proposition"

At Brisbane the NSW delegates did their best to reject the new objective, feeling that to carry it was not to help the workers so much as to provide a whip for their political enemies with which they could flog the Movement. The Brisbane Conference had failed to give a clear interpretation as to what the new objective really meant, and nobody had yet enlightened him as to what it really did mean. A big majority of the delegates at that Conference were gagged and bound to vote in a certain direction. He considered the Brisbane objective an abstract proposition, and while he did not suggest that they should repudiate what the Interstate Executive had done, there would be a proposal before Conference which he hoped delegates would seriously consider.

**Need for Labor Daily Press**

Referring to Labor’s defeat at the Sydney municipal elections, the President said it was due mainly to over-confidence. They relied on Labor’s good work to carry them through. But their enemies organised carefully, and had unlimited funds at their disposal, as well as a powerful press. It was all very well for delegates to say that the workers read the "S.M. 


Herald” and voted in the opposite direction. The fact remained that where a powerful press was hammering something into their minds day after day it was bound to have some effect. Labor would never be safe until it had its own press. (Cheers) He appealed to all delegates to use their efforts to get the money subscribed for Labor’s Daily Press as soon as possible. Anything they did in that direction would return benefits a thousandfold. They were not downhearted. Labor would come again in civic government. It might even be a good thing to get these temporary setbacks, as it would enable them to see their weaknesses and profit by them.

A Relic of Barbarism

Coming to the State elections, it could be said that they were defeated primarily by that relic of barbarism – sectarianism. The press worked it for all it was worth. Sectarianism was an unscrupulous electioneering dodge worked by the press and politicians. Supporters of Labor had to get that narrow prejudice about religions out of their minds. The Labor Movement knew no religion, and did not concern itself with any one religion. However, they had learned where the political enemy had hit them hardest, and would know how to fight it in future.

Another reason for Labor’s defeat was the want of organisation. The ALP was not organised as it should have been, and this was a matter that Conference should consider. There must be some guiding hand in the Movement, otherwise it would develop into a rabble. Labor supporters must realise that the first fundamental principle was solidarity. Those who were not prepared to obey the Executive’s ruling should get out of the Movement. He deplored the want of solidarity at the last elections, and hoped for better things in the future. It was not so much a question of forming new branches as to key up the existing branches.

Voting at Last Election

In answer to a delegate, the President denied that the Parliamentary Labor Party was responsible for the regimenting of the vote at the last State elections. The ALP Executive elected by Conference was responsible for it, and if it had acted wrong then they had themselves to blame. They had decided to do away with the cut-throat tactics that were a sad feature of the previous elections, and had the Executive’s proposals been carried out there would have been a different tale to tell. President Power made a lengthy explanation regarding the method of selecting candidates at the last election.

The Movement was now given an opportunity to take stock. They must build up a concrete Movement. It was all very well for Laborites to speak about solidarity. Let them act up to it. Today they had men
sneering at them and saying, “Where is the Labor party now?” They had to remember that if those men had stood to Labor during the war, when it needed support, Labor would not have been where it is today. In those dark hours Labor was betrayed by the very men who for years had mouthed solidarity every hour of the day.

President Power concluded a two-hour speech by appealing to delegates to rouse the Movement in preparation for the Federal campaign. They could capture the National Parliament if they set their shoulders to the wheel. They might never be able to attain Labor’s objective in the present generation, but at least they could make the way easier for those who came after them.

**Federal Leader Welcomed**

Mr Mat Charlton, Federal Labor Leader, was introduced to the delegates and received an enthusiastic welcome. In an address he thanked them for their hearty welcome, and said he recognised the responsibilities cast upon him as leader of the Federal Party. He referred feelingly to the passing away of his colleagues – Messrs Tudor, Ryan and Page. He did not think the Federal elections would take place before six or eight months. Labor could win if they got together. With proper organisation and solidarity the end of the Hughes Government was certain. There was no reason whatever why Labor should not win at the coming Federal elections.

Referring to the recent defeat in New South Wales, the Federal leader said that Labor was unquestionably met with a sweeping defeat. To ascertain the actual causes of this political setback should be one of the most important matters for the Conference. Personally, he attributed defeat to sectarianism and the vilifying attacks by members of their own party on members of the Cabinet. If the Movement was to be brought back to prestige it had to be placed before the interests of individuals. Sectionalism or any form of cliquism on the part of a few individuals might easily disintegrate the Party and bring the fabric of the Movement tumbling about their ears.

As regards the new objective passed by the Brisbane Conference, Mr Charlton said that he personally believed that such proposals, while worthy of consideration, should not be adopted by the Party. He claimed that the present objective provided a policy suitable for the workers, and would commend itself to the great majority of the electors of the Commonwealth.

A hearty vote of thanks to the Federal Leader for his able discourse was carried.
Representation on the Executive

Mr Geddes (Federated Society of Boilermakers) moved: “That in the opinion of Conference no two delegates from any one Trade Union or Labor League shall be eligible to accept a position on the ALP Executive Committee.” Mr Lynch (AWU) opposed the motion. He said that for a Union of 100,000 members to be restricted to one representative only on the Executive while the smallest League or Union could have equal representation was a farce. There was the case of the AWU. Its money had been the backbone of the ALP in every emergency. The motion was defeated on the voices.

Day 2, Monday, 5 June 1922

Executive’s Report

All day Monday was devoted to discussing the Executive’s report for the past year. The President allowed delegates the utmost freedom in debating the various happenings since last Conference. As a result the discussion was at times of a spirited nature.

Labor’s defeat at the last election was exhaustively dealt with, and various reasons for the setback were put forward. Some delegates blamed the method of selecting candidates, others the regimenting of the vote. Sectarianism was set down by some delegates as the prime factor responsible for defeat, while others contended that there was “a streak of yellow” within the Movement as well as outside it. Others again blamed the Parliamentary Party for “going slow” with Labor’s policy disheartening supporters, and bringing about a general feeling of apathy.

The Executive’s action in expelling Mr Catts was applauded. His bona fides as a working-class advocate had long been questioned by many delegates, while some asserted that prior to his expulsion he was taking active steps to form a new party.

The Upper House appointments came in for a great deal of criticism; also the action of Executive members continuing to hold their positions on the Executive after their election to the Upper House. Mention was also made of the absence of Upper House members during the recent filling of the Senate vacancy, with the result that the Labor candidate (ex-Senator Grant) was defeated.

Several amendments were moved by delegates, but these were defeated and the Executive’s report was finally adopted by 132 votes to 15.
**Labor’s New Objective. Discussion at NSW Labor Conference**

Last night at the NSW Labor Conference, discussion was commenced on Labor’s new objective, as passed by the Interstate Conference held at Brisbane in October, 1921. Mr G Gibbons moved the following motion: “That this Conference endorses the action of its delegates at the last Interstate Conference, held at Brisbane on October 10, 1921, and now instructs the Executive to take the necessary steps to summon a special Interstate Conference with a view to maintaining the present objective of the ALP”.

In answer to a delegate, the President (Mr Power) ruled that by the decision of the Brisbane Conference the new objective automatically replaced the old objective throughout the Commonwealth and would remain the objective until such times as it was varied.

Messrs MA Davidson, JM Baddeley, D Murray, MsLA, EC Magrath and Kendrey spoke in favour of the new objective, while opposition was voiced by Senator Gardiner, Mr WF Dunn, MLA, Messrs H Brown, Beckett, J Grant and several other delegates. The debate is still proceeding.

**Capitalism and Competition**

“No successful capitalist wants competition for himself – he only wants it for the working class, so that he can buy his labor power at the lowest competitive price in the labor market. The simple truth is that competition in industrial life belongs to the past, and is practically outgrown. The time is approaching when it will no longer be possible.”

Eugene V Debs

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**Day 3, Tuesday, 6 June 1922**

**Charges and Counter-Charges. New South Wales Labor Conference. Investigation Ordered.**

Arising out of a statement at the NSW Labor Conference on June 5 by Mr Lazzarini, MLA, that Mr G McGirr, MLA, had been partly responsible for Labor’s defeat at the last election because of his denouncement of what he called “Dooleyism,” ex-Ministers indulged in some plain speaking before the Conference.

On June 6 Mr McGirr addressed delegates on the charge made against him by Mr Lazzarini. The reason for Labor’s defeat, he said, was the action of men like Mr Lazzarini in opposing the basic wage. (Uproar) Mr Mutch, MLA, jumped up in the body of the hall and declared that the statement was false. Mr McGirr said that Mr Mutch was another Minister who fought against it. (Further uproar) Mr McGirr added that Mr Mutch
came to him with tears in his eyes, and asked for a letter exonerating him from the charge of voting against the basic wage proposal in Cabinet, so that he could win the selection for Botany. “I took pity on you and gave it,” added Mr McGirr. At this Conference became noisier than ever. Mr Mutch endeavoured to speak, but his remarks could not be heard.

**Cabinet Against Him**

After order had been restored, Mr McGirr continued his remarks. He said he had been accused of losing the elections. He objected to colleagues stating that he had handed Labor over to the enemy. Several months ago inspired attacks appeared in the daily press that could have only come from his colleagues. He saw then that he was going to have a rough passage in the Cabinet.

He was dragged over the coals by the Cabinet because he promised to bring in a measure for Motherhood Endowment. His colleagues said he exceeded his duties. In order to force the hand of the Cabinet he had to arrange a big deputation of women to wait upon him. Several women delegates at the Conference could verify what he said.

His refusal to gazette the basic wage was opposed by some of his Cabinet colleagues. It was the action of those men that had brought about the defeat of the Government. He mentioned the names of Messrs Loughlin, Mutch and Lazzarini. Mr Lazzarini came to him and said that the workers were in favour of reduced wages because if the £4/5/- was retained it would mean more unemployment. (Uproar)

**“Half-and-Half Labor Men”**

The whole cause of the trouble was that he offended a few brewers and bookmakers by threatening to get money from them by taxation. If the Labor Movement got into the hands of brewers and bookmakers, then God help it!

He concluded by saying that it was men like Loughlin, Lazzarini, Mutch, and other half-and-half Labor men who were responsible for Labor’s loss at the elections.

**Day 4, Wednesday, 7 June 1922**

On the following night the matter was again before Conference. Mr Loughlin, MLA, secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved the following motion: “That this Conference forthwith provide a full opportunity to Mr McGirr to complete his remarks of the previous evening, and to any other delegate to express his views on the matter”.

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“Some Secret History”

Mr Loughlin prefaced his remarks by saying that he wanted the matter cleared up once and for all time. He said he intended to tell delegates some secret history. He gave a complete denial to the allegations made by Mr McGirr. Cabinet did not rebuke Mr McGirr for bringing forward the Motherhood Endowment Bill. The late Mr Storey considered it one of the most important measures from the Labor point of view, and put Mr McGirr in charge of the matter to enable him to devote all his time to getting the necessary information in order to draw up a proper bill. It was 18 months before Mr McGirr brought the matter forward, and delegates would be surprised to hear that he proposed to finance it per medium of a poll-tax on adults. This suggestion was ridiculed by the Cabinet and was not given serious consideration. That matter had never before been mentioned, not even to the rank and file members of the Party.

The Basic Wage

As regards the basic wage, the Cabinet was faced with a serious position. Mr McGirr had refused to gazette the basic wage. They were informed by the Attorney-General (Mr McTiernan) that a feeling existed in legal circles that if they did not gazette the basic wage there would be no basic wage at all. It was treacherous and cowardly on the part of Mr McGirr to go outside the Cabinet room and accuse colleagues of being against the basic wage. It was merely a matter of difference on the methods to be employed. It was Messrs Gosling and Davidson who suggested legislation to maintain the basic wage of £4/5/- and not Mr McGirr. But did they think the Upper House would allow that measure to go through? When he mentioned it to Mr McGirr, the latter said: “Well, what does it matter? It’s good enough dope for the mugs outside”.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA: That is a lie.

Mr Loughlin said it was the truth and there were other members who would bear out his statement. Ministers took the view that the proper course to pursue was to refer it back to the Board of Trade and have it re-determined on a fairer basis. Personally, he thought that if they had gone about the matter constitutionally there were enough members in the Upper House who had principle enough to have been willing to agree to a measure to maintain the basic wage at the old standard. (Laughter)

The Sydney Selection

In connection with the Department of Labor and Industry, it was not true that Mr McGirr had been put out of that office. He went to Mr Dooley.
and asked to be relieved of the position as the work was too much for him. He condemned Mr McGirr’s action in revealing Cabinet secrets.

Mr Loughlin concluded his speech by making reference to alleged corruption in connection with the Sydney selection ballot. He said that Mr Catts had made definite charges. (Laughter) In answer to a question, he said Ministers took the view that it was better to assure the workers £4/2/- per week than allow them to be without a basic wage, and compel them to fight through the courts for a living wage.

Mr Lazzarini’s Denial

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, also denied the charges made against him by Mr McGirr. He had never opposed the basic wage, either in Cabinet or caucus, and asserted that Mr McGirr was not responsible for the Motherhood Endowment Bill. He simply became connected with it because of the fact that he was appointed Minister for Motherhood. It was a lie on the part of Mr McGirr to say that he (Mr Lazzarini) favoured the reduction of the basic wage to prevent unemployment, and contended that his Trade Union experience and regard for the workers was greater than that of Mr McGirr. He supported the statements of Mr Loughlin as regards the history of the Motherhood Endowment Bill and the basic wage developments. Mr McGirr was the man in the party least responsible for the Motherhood Employment Bill.

A Personal Letter

Mr Mutch, MLA, hoped that Conference would settle the matter once and for all by appointing an investigating committee. He traced the origin of Mr McGirr’s accusation to a report in the Daily Telegraph of January 18 last, in which it was stated that at a meeting of the Party on the previous day Mr McGirr charged five of his colleagues – Messrs McKell, Loughlin, Lazzarini, Cann and himself – with having voted against the basic wage, and that Mr Loughlin had there attacked Mr McGirr in connection with the matter. This was a deliberate lie. No reference had been made at that meeting to the basic wage, and Mr Loughlin did not even speak. Mr McGirr afterwards denied the newspaper report, and in response to a request from him (Mr Mutch) wrote him a personal letter in which he specifically denied the statement in the press. That was the letter Mr McGirr said he came whining to him to get.

“Bullied and Browbeaten”

Mr Mutch said it was a strange thing that Mr McGirr could not produce one Cabinet Minister who would back up his charges of opposition to the basic wage or Motherhood Endowment. No such Minister existed.
He accused Mr McGirr of making reckless statements against members of Parliament who would not see eye to eye with him in his nefarious schemes. He (Mr Mutch) had been bullied and browbeaten because he would not fall in with Mr McGirr’s schemes. However, he would stake his reputation in the Labor Movement against that of Mr McGirr, who had been nothing else than a limelighter ever since he assumed office.

**Day 5, Thursday, 8 June 1922**

On the following evening (June 8) Mr G McGirr was present at Conference to reply to the statements made by Messrs Mutch, Loughlin and Lazzarini. He stated that he had just returned from the country for the purpose of being able to refute the charges made against him. He opened by referring to the campaign directed against him through the columns of the daily press during the basic wage discussion some months ago, and indicated how it was worked. It was untrue to say that he was revealing Cabinet secrets. He was merely replying to Cabinet secrets divulged by other Ministers per medium of the capitalist press. He contended that the greatest curse to the Labor Movement was caucus secrecy. It was a whitewash brush for hypocrites and scoundrels, and it was only when they were behind closed doors that they found out who the hypocrites were. (Applause)

**Jealous of his Popularity**

It has been said that he knew nothing of industrial matters. He admitted frankly that he was a country man. Then why was he appointed Minister for Labor and Industry by the men who now condemned him? There must have been some ulterior motive for the appointment. The plain truth was that his colleagues were jealous of the popularity he was getting because of his administrations of the Health and Motherhood Department. So they got together and said: “Let’s put him in a position where he’ll break his neck. We’ll take the damned popularity out of him. We’ll put him in a Department that will ruin him”.

**The Basic Wage Declaration**

At that time a reduction in the basic wage had been ordered by the Board of Trade. The day he took over control of the Department of Labor and Industry he found that behind his back the proclamation ordering the reduction in the basic wage had been sent to the Government Printer. Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, informed him what had been done, adding,
“They were trying to put it over you, so as to make you black with the workers”. An investigation by his private secretary confirmed what Mr Stuart-Robertson had said. He immediately wrote a minute forbidding the publication of the proclamation. Next day the capitalist press came out with reports attacking him for “flouting the judge”, and refusing to carry out the dictates of the Board of Trade. His colleagues were like ferocious lions, and accused him of limelighting. Mr Loughlin, MLA, said, “You’re looking for money to finance your Motherhood Endowment Scheme. We’ll save you £200,000 by reducing the wages of the public servants, and you can have the money for Motherhood Endowment”. Mr Lazzarini also objected to what he had done. Mr Mutch said his teachers had to take less wages than outside workers and contended that the wages of outside workers should be reduced. Mr Dooley said they would have to get legal opinion, and saw Mr McTiernan on the matter. Mr McTiernan ruled that if they didn’t gazette the basic wage there would be no basic wage whatever in force, and the employers could pay what they liked. “My horse-sense taught me better than that,” added Mr McGirr.

A Cabinet Paradox

From then on there was a strong move to try and compel him to gazette the basic wage reduction. What he wanted to know was why they put him in charge of the Department at all, and why the proclamation of the declaration was ordered behind his back. He could think of no other reason than that they wanted to degrade him. At the Cabinet table he said that if ever there was a paradox it was here. He, who had not been trained in Unionism, was the only Labor man honest enough to oppose a reduction of wages, with Unionist Ministers against him. When the news leaked out, Labor men outside the Party stood solid behind him, and when the other Ministers saw this, they rushed to cover.

“I ask you, delegates,” said Mr McGirr, “did you ever see another Minister come out and stand by me in my fight against the reduction of the basic wage? You did not. I tell you that men like Lazzarini, Mutch and Loughlin are a curse to the Labor Movement. It was sorrowful to sit with men who were so spineless. Even the capitalists were praising them as ‘moderate’ men. Ask them why they were always cheek by jowl with Jimmy Catts against me?” Mr McGirr added that Messrs Storey, Loughlin, and Lazzarini were members of the infamous P and O organisation, and when the Executive took action Storey and Loughlin said they were sick of the action of the ALP in dealing with the organisation, and were going to stick to their pals.
The Basic Wage Bill

After he had been attacked for refusing to gazette the basic wage declaration, he took the matter to caucus, and a resolution was passed to introduce a bill to fix a basic wage. Notwithstanding that, Mr Dooley said that no such bill would be introduced. Mr Kavanagh objected to the abolition of the Board of Trade. This was only natural, as Mr Kavanagh was a member of the Board. When he took the measure to the Cabinet he found his colleagues hostile to it. But Mr Kavanagh said, “Don’t let him take it back to caucus. He’ll show them that we are against him.”

When he did introduce the bill in Parliament there was great laughter from the “Nationalists,” who said: “Hello, McGirr has had a win over them, after all”. He denied that his colleagues were in favour of the bill. It was only when they saw it was popular that they got under cover and became ardent supporters of it. When they first opposed the measure he said, “Surely you don’t want it to be said that a Labor Government is in favour of cutting the wages of the workers. If you are not willing to save them 3/- per week, how can you make them believe that you’ll give them the millennium?”

“No Better than the ‘Nationalists’”

The Railway Commissioners made a move to reduce the wages of railway workers by 3/- per week in the Arbitration Court. Union officials came to him and asked that counsel be briefed to oppose the application of the Commissioners. He claimed it was the duty of the Government to prevent the Commissioners making any such application. When he decided to take up the fight on behalf of the railway unions, he raised another hornet’s nest around his head. Mr McTiernan said he had exceeded his duties, and went to Mr Dooley, who sent for him and said, “You must not do these things.” He (Mr McGirr) replied: “Are you going to let their wages be cut without putting up a fight? That’s no better than the ‘Nationalists’ would do. If you won’t order counsel to appear, I’ll pay for counsel out of my own pocket”.

When the Basic Wage Bill was placed before Parliament he was confident that efforts would be made to prevent it becoming law. The first reading got through all right, but at the second reading stage Mr Lang was put up on the Budget speech to block the bill. Mr Dooley had told prominent men in the city that the £4/5/- Basic Wage Bill would never see the light of day. And it never did. If the Ministry was sincere about the matter, it could have rushed the bill through the House at one sitting, just as it did with the Wheat Marketing Bill, and had it tested in the Upper House. That would have shown the workers that they were genuine.
No Money for Motherhood Endowment

Mr McGirr claimed that the Cabinet had no intention of allowing the Motherhood Endowment Bill to become law. Following the deputation of women who asked for some relief, and his promise of 6/- per week for every child above the number of two, members of the Cabinet said he had a cheek to bind the Cabinet on a matter like that. McGirr replied that it was only a matter of a million and a half, and he would see where they would get the money. A committee was appointed, and various suggestions made, which were presented to Cabinet. The poll-tax was only one of them. It was the committee’s suggestion, not his. In his Budget speech, Mr Lang, MLA, admitted that he had made no provision for the financing of the measure, and when he asked him why no provision had been made, he said, “You get the money yourself”. Mr McGirr said he would get it from the Coal Vend, and other combines, and from bookmakers and brewers. Then he was told that if he did that he would ruin the Movement.

“Friends of Jimmy Catts”

“I tell you,” said Mr McGirr, “That the worst samples of representatives in our Movement are the men who have been taken from the ranks of the workers. It is a sorry state of affairs, but it is true. They say that I am no Labor man, although I have been 20 years in the Movement. The men who say this are Messrs Mutch, Lazzarini, and Loughlin, who are friends of Jimmy Catts, and who are working with him against me. They were working men, and when they were elevated to the Ministry they hobnobbed with the aristocracy, and so enjoyed it that they forgot their Labor principles. I can tell you now that had Mr Storey been alive, and had these men had their way, they would have been in a coalition with the ‘Nationalists’ by now. I am opposed to half-baked Labor men coming here and attacking me, and I hope the Conference will carry a motion that will unmask these enemies of the Movement.”

The Letter to Mr Mutch

In answer to questions, Mr McGirr said that he gave Mr Mutch a letter exonerating him on the basic wage question because he was having difficulty with his selection. He did that out of pity for him. He regretted having done that, in view of subsequent events. But what Mr Mutch did not tell the Conference was that he (Mr Mutch) wrote the “Dear Tom” letter himself on his own typewriter, and sent it along for him (McGirr) to sign. When it was said that the Upper House would not pass the Basic Wage Bill, he advocated packing the Upper House. They could have done it – they could have put 100 men there if they liked – and the
Governor wouldn’t have objected. If he had, they could have got another Governor from Downing Street. The Governor would have done what he was told. All statements to the contrary were so much dope only fit for children. He added that he wanted to continue the life of Parliament to pass the Basic Wage and Mother Endowment Bills, but other Ministers preferred to see the workers thrown to the wolves.

**Mr Molesworth’s Explanation**

Mr Molesworth, MLA, said he opposed Mr McGirr’s actions on the question of the basic wage because he was convinced that if the proclamation had not been issued there would have been no basic wage at all, and the employers could have paid the workers what they liked. The basic wage would not have passed the Upper House; Levy would have resigned, and the Motherhood Endowment Bill would have been lost. And that was what actually happened. He was opposed to the full light of publicity being thrown on doings in the caucus room.

**The Legal Aspect of the Basic Wage**

Mr McTiernan, MLA, made an explanation regarding the legal position arising out of the non-gazettal of the basic wage. He claimed that the Board of Trade could order the issue of the proclamation, and that Ministers could not prevent it. If it was not gazetted the basic wage would lapse, and the workers could be reduced back to the former wage of £3/17/- per week. As a matter of fact, the employers did go to the Court and got the wages reduced. It was unjust to accuse him of being against the basic wage of £4/5/- . It was likewise untrue. He added that the Cabinet had no power to prevent the Railway Commissioners going to the Court and getting a reduction of wages. A special Act gave them absolute control over that Department.

**Favoured the Reduction**

Mr J Birt, MLA, referred to his opposition to Mr McGirr’s action in not gazetting the basic wage. He contended there had been decreases in the cost of living and as they were on a falling market he thought it better to agree to the reduction and fix it at that, than have other reductions made later on owing to lower prices. But when the Basic Wage Bill was introduced he and others lined up solid in support of it.

Mr Buckley, MLA, also made a statement along similar lines to the others in reply to Mr McGirr.
Committee Appointed

Mr G Cross moved that a committee be appointed by Conference, consisting of two delegates and two members of Parliament, with an independent chairman, to inquire into and report to Conference upon the allegations of Messrs McGirr, Mutch, Loughlin and Lazzarini. Messrs Lavelle, MHR, Watkins, MHR, Magrath and Hutchinson, with the President (Mr J Power) as chairman, were appointed.

The New Executive

The following is the result of the election for positions on the Executive of the New South Wales Branch of the ALP for the current year:

President: Mr J M Power, MLC
Vice-Presidents (2): Messrs GH Buckland and W Martin
Interstate Executive (2): Messrs JM Power, MLC, and J Bailey, MLA
Interstate Conference Delegates (6): Messrs J Power, MLC, WJ Mahony and WH Lambert, MsHR, JM Baddeley, MLA, W Carey and Mrs K Dwyer
General Executive (30): Mrs K Dwyer, Messrs D McLelland, J F Higgins, Miss EM O’Sullivan, Messrs GH Sutherland, Cecil Last, PV Stokes, G Rowlands, HL Brown, EC O’Dea, Mrs M Benson, Messrs JM Kelly, J Coates, T Thick, WR Colbourne, JB Dooley, V McCauley, EA Roberts, Mrs Devitt, Messrs J White, J Tyrrell, PJ Dunn, J Potter, Mrs M Bailey, Messrs W Hutchison, WJ Mills, Mrs Seery, Messrs T S Bartle, TP Lonergan, Mrs Melville

The following were declared elected as alternate delegates to the State Executive: Messrs C Carroll, C Hackett, W Ely, Miss Golding, Mr ES Beeby, Miss S Mitchell, Messrs EC Magrath, TJ Swiney, E Cross, T Doyle, WJS Carroll, WA Gibbs, AH Moate, RD Bramston, W Padgen, W Seale, J Culbert, J Mostyn, Miss L Fowler, Messrs AE Vernon, W Colbourne, G Gallagher, Ned Riley, R Bates, G Buckley, Miss E Kelly, Mrs J Kirwin, Mr W Sturgess, Mrs J Grant and Mr W J Gibb.

(Report from the Australian Worker, 14 June 1922)

Debate on Brisbane Objective

The discussion on the new objective of the Australian Labor Party, as decided by the Brisbane Interstate Conference last October, was commenced at the NSW Labor Conference on Tuesday, June 6 last.
Mr G Gibbons (Murrumbidgee) moved: “That this Conference endorses the action of its delegates at the last Interstate Conference, held at Brisbane on October 10, 1921, and now invites the Executive to take the necessary steps to summon a special Interstate Conference with a view to maintaining the present objective of the Australian Labor Party.”

Mr Gibbons contended that the present objective was sufficiently wide to embrace all working-class interests. He did not see any reason why the objective should be changed. The utterances of some of the delegates at the Brisbane Conference were foreign to Australian sentiment.

**Breach Must Be Healed**

Mr MA Davidson, MLA, opposed the motion. There was a large rift between the political and industrial wings of the Movement that had to be healed. The present motion was a reactionary one, and to carry it would be to brand themselves as reactionaries. The old objective was only a means to an objective. The new objective provided what would be done when the stage covered by the old objective was reached. It was all very well to talk about nationalisation, but were the workers in the railways any better off than those under private Capitalism? When they were able to take control of industries, what were they going to do with them if not socialise them? Why fence with words? Some of the delegates “got the wind up” simply because Labor lost the recent elections.

Mr EC Magrath (Printing Trades) hoped that Labor would stand by the new objective. It had been misrepresented both inside and outside the Movement. No real objection could be taken to it. The old objective was nothing more than generalisation; the new objective was something definite. Mr H Brown (Ryde) supported the motion. Mr D Murray, MLA, opposed the motion. There must be linking up of the industrial and political wings, otherwise Labor would suffer. Even the capitalists linked up solidly against the workers, but the latter were fighting amongst themselves. Some delegates condemned the Council of Action, but did they not have Councils of Action within the Labor Movement?

**Senator Gardiner and “Side-Stepping”**

Senator Gardiner claimed that there was nothing in the old objective that did not make for progress. Did they oppose it because it was too Australian? Did they want something made in another country? He was an Australian, and did not see where they were going to gain anything from the new objective. They would lose seats throughout the Commonwealth unless the old objective was restored. Didn’t they realise that in elections they had to side-step? They had to compromise. He claimed that to bring in the new objective was stepping backwards.
Australian Labor led the world in progress, under the old objective, and that was good enough for him. He opposed the new objective. Mr Beckett (Ryde) said he would vote for the motion. Mr Kendrey (Randwick) said they would have to do everything they could to consolidate the Movement. The people had to be economically educated. The goal of the Movement was Socialism, whether they liked it or not. They should not be afraid of any bogey raised by the capitalist press, which would raise some bogey against Labor even if there was no objective at all.

"Tell the Workers the Truth"

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA, said he intended to leave no mistake as to where he stood. Politicians had stated that the new objective was syndicalism. They were wrong, and didn't know what syndicalism really was. Politicians who opposed the new objective were little better than editors of the capitalist press. It was time for them to consider where they were going to take their place in the working class Movement. They would have to get down to bedrock. If they could not run the Labor Movement better at the present time, then it was high time they handed it over to the Industrial Movement to manage.

He was as good an Australian as Senator Gardiner, and would debate the new objective with him any day he liked. They had pledged themselves at the All-Australian Congress to see that the new objective would be carried out. He regretted to say that some of them had turned traitors. At Brisbane Catts and others spoke like editors of the capitalist press. He had always told his political supporters the truth that they would not get emancipation per medium of a Parliament of a capitalist State. Others were not so honest. He wasn’t concerned about losing his seat, but he was concerned about the emancipation of the workers. The big Unions had adopted the new objective, and if the officials of those Unions were not going to stand up to it, then the rank and file would know about it. This was not a time for gerrymandering.

Mr Dunn’s Objection

Mr Dunn, MLA, opposed the new objective, claiming it to be visionary. If it was retained it would keep Labor out of office for 50 years. He contended that the old objective gave them everything they wanted. Mr EJ Stein also opposed any alteration in the objective. He regretted that the matter had been brought up at all. Mr J Grant said he did not understand what was meant by the new objective, and was opposed to it.

Mr JP Dunn moved the following amendment: "That this Conference expresses the opinion that the objective arrived at by the Brisbane Conference is bourgeois in its incidence and absolutely negatives the international revolutionary character of the efforts of the world’s workers
in their endeavour to secure an economic change from their chains of
slavery, and that we inform the Labor Movement in Australia that we
stand for a straight-out industrial republic based on a working class
recognition of international thought and action, and the world-wide
slogan of ‘the world for the world’s workers.’”

Day 6, Friday, 9 June 1922

Mr Blakeley Stands by New Objective

Discussion was resumed on the objective on June 9. Mr A Blakeley,
MHR, opposed the motion moved by Mr Gibbons to refer the matter
back to another Interstate Conference. He stood by the Brisbane objec-
tive. It was foolish to say that the new objective was the dream of visio-
naries. Realising that a big section of the Industrial Movement was
drifting away from Labor, the Interstate Executive called the all-
Australian TU Congress. At that Congress there were 250 delegates
present, 85 per cent of whom were supporters of the ALP. It was one of
the most important conferences ever held in the Commonwealth. Propo-
sals opposed to political action were defeated by large majorities,
showing that the delegates were behind the ALP. The Congress made
certain resolutions to bring the industrial wing into closer touch with the
political body. Delegates at that Congress pledged themselves to stand
by the decisions. The Interstate Conference met in Brisbane and ratified
the decision of the Melbourne Congress, as far as the objective was
concerned. Since then the objective had received more hostility from men
within the Labor Movement than outside it. An attempt had been made
to make it a fight of Australian against anti-Australian. How anybody
could call the new objective anti-Australian he failed to see. The ‘Socialist
Tiger’ bogey, which had been trotted out by their opponents until it had
rotted away, was now resurrected by men and women within the
Movement. He contended the objective was all right if they had the
courage to stand behind it.

AWU behind Brisbane Objective

The next All-Australian TU Congress would probably be more ALP than
the previous one, but if the present Conference expressed its opposition
to the Brisbane objective it would give those people who fought the ALP
at the last Congress the very weapon they were looking for. He was
surprised to see that some delegates were getting cold feet over the
proposition. There was no occasion to drag in the IWW and Bolshevism,
as some people had done. They should be prepared to meet the
industrialists half-way. There could not be any success unless both wings of the Movement were walking side by side. The AWU had always stuck to the ALP and had put thousands of pounds into it. He had to tell delegates that the AWU was solidly behind the new objective. If Conference repudiated this objective it said in so many words that the AWU was on the wrong track. He ridiculed those men and women who said that the new objective smacked of IWW-ism and Communism. It was an objective the Movement could carry. They had carried heavier loads than this in the past. But to throw the new objective back into the teeth of the All-Australian Congress was another way of saying that they did not want solidarity or the support of the industrialists.

An End to Apathy

Mr J McGarry supported the Brisbane objective. The rank and file of the workers were out of touch with the ALP. If Conference endorsed the new objective and stood up to it, then there would be an end of that apathy which had spelt disaster to them in the past. He hoped that Conference would not ask for another Interstate Conference.

Mrs Fowler was opposed to the Brisbane objective. She feared that the Supreme Economic Council would displace Parliament, also that Labor would not get into power with the new objective. She thought they should confine their activities to trying to get Labor into power so that some immediate relief should be given to the workers and their families.

Opposed to Economic Councils

Mr McClelland (Blacksmiths) moved a further amendment: “That this Conference adopts the Brisbane objective, and the Federal Executive be requested to call immediately a special Interstate Conference for the purpose of reviewing the machinery clauses, and also for deleting sub-clause “F,” which reads as follows: “The establishment of an Elective Supreme Economic Council by all nationalised industries”. As an industrialist he favoured the objective, with the exception of the proposal to form Economic Councils, which meant setting up industrial parliaments to displace the present parliamentary system.

Mr W Colbourne claimed that the old objective was good enough for the workers. The new objective would be used by their political opponents at the next elections. He claimed that it was not democratic. The industrialists were not the backbone of the Labor Movement and would not put Labor into Parliament. They had to have the support of the other people as well.


**Capitalism’s Economic Councils**

Mr T Holloway (AWU) in supporting the Brisbane objective, said that the Economic Council would not displace the Parliamentary machinery of today, but would pave the way for economic justice for the workers. Why were they opposed to Economic Councils? Didn’t the capitalists have their economic councils? There was the financial economic council of the capitalists which had been responsible for Australia’s staggering war debt of well on the way to £500,000,000. There were the commercial and mercantile economic councils of Capitalism which bled the people white for profits. Then there was the industrial economic council of the capitalists which forced men into the trenches during the war for a few paltry shillings a day. In England it had conscripted six million workers at a miserable dole. To the extent that the workers as soldiers had been paid less than the wage of an artisan, to that extent they had been robbed by the Industrial Economic Council of Capitalism. He claimed that the industrialists should be given power. They produced the wealth and bore all the burden, but were treated worse than animals. The capitalists fed their horses whether they were working or not, but when a man ceased work he starved. They should take no note of what the capitalist press was saying. It would always attack them, whether they had an objective or none at all.

**Political Expediency Advocated**

Mr M Gosling, MLA, counselled strategy. They were near to a Federal election and he wanted to see Labor elected. He claimed that if Labor won the Federal elections the present objective would enable them to do all they wished. It would enable them to nationalise industries per medium of the Commonwealth Bank without the spending of a single penny piece. It would also enable them to force a levy on the capitalists who had made fortunes out of the war. They hadn’t exploited the possibilities of the present objective; it could be made as revolutionary as possible. He thought the Brisbane objective should be dropped, otherwise it would embarrass them at the coming Federal elections.

Mrs Bailey also opposed the Brisbane objective. She was just as militant as any other delegate, but a ‘moderate’ militant. She hoped they would vote for another Interstate Conference. Mr Manuel (Northern Rivers) wanted to know if there was not much difference between the two objectives, as some speakers had alleged, what was the reason for all this debate? He did not think the Movement was going fast enough. In 1917 Fuller had taken over the coal mines and worked them, but Labor, instead of taking over the Broken Hill mines, had let the workers starve. It was nearly time they gave the new objective a chance. The old objective didn’t seem to get them anywhere.
Attack on Bob Ross

Mrs K Dwyer said the only reason why she and others at the Brisbane Conference opposed the new objective was that they did not think the time was ripe enough for its introduction. She claimed that some of the twenty-four delegates at Brisbane pledged to support the new objective spoke as if they were personally opposed to it. She made special reference to the speeches by Mr RS Ross, claiming that they showed him to be intoxicated with make-believe words, which would be all right about 50 years ahead. He and others claimed that they had 700,000 workers behind them. That was not true. She thought it was nearly time they gave up the ‘dope’ of promising workers something that could not be got for at least 100 years. They had to get into Parliament first. The old objective went far enough.

Mr H Dale supported the Brisbane objective. They should place principles first and not exist for the purpose of emancipating politicians. Up to date the efforts of politicians had been 90 per cent ineffective. Democracy went further than politics; it must be in the workshops, and until then the workers would never be emancipated. He ridiculed the statements by Senator Gardiner and others, who predicted chaos if the Socialisation of Industry was put into operation. Socialisation would be carried out scientifically, and there would be no dislocation whatever. The intelligent writers and speakers of the Guild Socialist movement in England showed the way it could be done. They must go ahead. The old objective was out-of-date and only gave them a miserable wage system.

Thinking 100 Years Ahead

Mr Parker Moloney, MHR, failed to see where the new objective was going to make the people one whit better off than they were today. He did not think it was worth anything to the workers, but would provide the ‘Nationalists’ with the whip they wanted to flog Labor at the coming Federal elections. He claimed that under the old objective they could give all the people what they wanted, but the new objective would scare people away from the Labor movement. Men and women were looking for something to benefit them now – not 100 years hence.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that under the new objective they laid it down that those who produced would get the full product of their labor. Didn’t they believe in that? Was there anything dishonest about that? What was Labor coming to if it opposed that? Under the operation of the Supreme Economic Council the industries would support the workers when they were not working as well as when they were working. Did they oppose that? Or did they still stand for the present system whereby the capitalists controlled the factories and sweated the workers as much as they liked?
“Get Down to Bedrock”

They opposed the workers controlling the factories - they said it was not democracy. Then they must be in favour of the capitalists controlling the factories for profit. It was time the Labor Movement got down to bedrock instead of trimming all the time. They had wasted time for 20 years. Let them support the Brisbane objective and carry out Labor’s true policy of emancipating the workers.

Day 7, Saturday, 10 June 1922

The debate on the Brisbane objective was resumed on Saturday afternoon (June 10). Mr AA Jones (Clerks) thought they should be very careful about taking on a new objective at the present time. They should not give their opponents a chance to attack them, as they would if the new objective was adopted. Mr Dalley (Woollahra) also opposed the new objective. He didn’t think the workers would stand behind it. It was an extreme objective.

Who Should Control the Industries?

Mr Ward (Wharf Laborers) said that those who opposed the new objective were practising the same expediency as Holman and others and which had almost ruined the Labor Movement. To talk of nationalising industry under the old objective only meant that they were going to change from private Capitalism to State Capitalism, which was even worse. The industries must be socialised and controlled by those who worked them. It would be as good for the farmer to control his own products as for the industrialist to control his own workshop.

Mr F Burke, MLA, claimed that to adopt the new objective would be to bring about a radical alteration in the form of government. The object, he claimed, was to wipe out Parliament altogether. They were all for the emancipation of the workers, though they differed in methods. He contended they could get all they desired under the old objective. They should move slowly at the present time, and get back on the Treasury benches as soon as possible. But they would not do so with the new objective.

Mr Amos (Eastern Suburbs) opposed the Brisbane objective, claiming that it conflicted with the Australian sentiment. He didn’t think the people were ready for socialisation. Let them win the Federal elections, and under the old objective they would get all they desired. The workers were only entitled to a fair reward for their labour, and that was all they wanted.
**Shadow-Sparing by Politicians**

Mr T Rickards (Musicians’ Union) supported the Brisbane objective. There were always a lot of delegates ready to cry, “don’t go too far or you’ll frighten the electors”. It was time they gave up that way of thinking. The Labor Movement was now reaping what it had sown in preaching that doctrine. They should do away with camouflage. The people wanted a definite programme, not an exhibition of shadow-sparing by politicians. The mental psychology of the people was such that they were prepared to receive the truth. The Movement should come out and preach the new objective. There was a very vital difference between nationalisation and socialisation. The former was only State Capitalism. They had a splendid example of socialisation in the public libraries and parks where people enjoyed the benefits without payment. Was it wrong to demand the dictatorship of the workers? The only alternative to that was the dictatorship of the capitalists, which was in operation today. Did they want that to continue? The cry that half a loaf was better than no bread was the hackneyed cry of capitalists and the capitalist press.

**Old Objective should be Retained**

Mr AW Buckley opposed the Brisbane objective claiming that they would never get into power with it on the platform. Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants) said he, as one of the delegates at the Brisbane Conference, had voted against it, though he was not instructed to do so. Nobody was able to explain what it meant. He wouldn’t oppose socialisation if he thought it could be brought about, but he didn’t think it could be brought about. They could not get socialisation by the Parliamentary system, and he contended it was better to stick to the old objective which would get them into Parliament. He attributed Labor’s defeat at the recent election in part to the new objective.

Mr Lynch (Railway Workers) was surprised to hear some delegates appealing for the cultivation of an Australian sentiment. During the war the same men were appealing to workers to go to foreign lands to shed their blood. The objection to the objective by politicians showed they were more concerned about their jobs than the welfare of the workers. If they wanted to see how nationalisation would work they had only to take the railways, where the Commissioners had introduced the infamous medical test for the purpose of victimising workers. Private capitalists had never done anything like that. There was a lot of cheap talk about ‘White Australia’, yet a couple of hundred yards away the vegetable markets were monopolised by Chinamen, and the Labor Government had done nothing to prevent it.
Would Benefit Farmers

The workers were worse off today than they were 30 years ago, and if the politicians wanted to enthuse the workers they would have to give them something they understood. The workers wanted the Brisbane objective, and it was high time they saw about the workers controlling industry. As far as the farmers were concerned, socialisation would mean that they would control their own wheat instead of the grain sharks controlling it as at present.

Mr E Clear (Albury), who claimed to be the only genuine farmer at the Conference, strongly opposed the Brisbane objective.

Mr Buckland’s Opposition

Mr G Buckland (Central Branch, AWU) strongly opposed the new objective. He claimed that there were not ten delegates who understood what it meant. Many of the delegates who were concerned about the new objective were not so much concerned about getting Labor’s daily press going, which was something material and not visionary. The Brisbane objective would not do all they desired. Delegates had got a false impression about it. It was not a matter of whether he personally favoured or condemned it, but whether it was to the interests of the people. The present objective would go as far as the new one, though it was in different words. To carry the new objective would be to place in the hands of their opponents something with which they could flog Labor. Their enemies would be able to distort Labor’s ideals if the new objective was carried. The old objective could not be distorted. Delegates at the Brisbane Conference were not allowed to give free expression to their thoughts, but were pledged to vote a certain way. The new objective would alienate the support of the great bulk of the people. If the new objective would carry them one inch further he would support it. But it was his opinion that instead of putting Labor into power it would keep Labor out of power. The people were not prepared to go as far as the Brisbane objective indicated.

Economic Councils Explained

Mr J O’Brien resented delegates making continual use of the “I’m an Australian” phrase. It had a sinister motive. Men who used it were as bad as sectarian mongers. He favoured the Brisbane objective. If the old objective were suitable they should have shown more progress. They seemed afraid of forming Economic Councils, but there were Economic Councils at the present time such as the Employers’ Federation and the Chambers of Manufactures and Commerce. It was time the workers took the control of industry out of the hands of the capitalists. Wouldn’t these
Councils work for the advantage of the workers? Then why did they oppose them? The Railway Commissioners and the Harbor Trust were really Economic Councils, and they functioned alongside Parliament without clashing. The Economic Councils would control only industrial affairs, and wouldn’t interfere with Parliament.

All the politicians had to offer against the Brisbane objective was political expediency. He contended that the Industrial Movement would be consolidated if the Brisbane objective was adopted. Not one concrete argument had been advanced against it – it was political expediency all the time. If, as had been stated, delegates at the Brisbane Conference had been drunk with idealism, then delegates at this Conference who opposed it were drunk with conservatism. They should be more honest with the people.

**Thinks it Sovietism**

Mr B Olde (Western Suburbs) opposed the Brisbane objective, contending that behind it was Sovietism pure and simple. Mr Lavelle, MHR (AWU), was also opposed to the new objective. It was not the fault of the political action that they were not further advanced. It was the fault of the people themselves. In Queensland, under the old objective, the Government had been able to function in the interests of the people. He didn’t see what they would gain from the new objective that they could not gain from the old objective. Let them give Parliament adequate powers and they would accomplish all they desired. He objected to an outside body moulding their objective, as had been done at the All-Australian TU Congress. Some of the Unions had since repudiated the Brisbane objective, claiming it did not go far enough. If they altered the objective they would do something detrimental to the Movement, and prevent members gaining control of the Treasury benches either in the Federal or State Parliaments. The industrialists who were keen on the Brisbane objective were not so keen on raising money for Labor’s daily press. The workers wanted something immediately in the shape of higher wages and better living conditions, not something visionary.

**The AWU Constitution**

Mr Seale (Waterside Workers) said he was surprised at delegates of the AWU opposing the Brisbane objective. On the other hand, Mr Arthur Blakeley, MHR, who was General President, had put all his weight behind the new objective, yet men like Messrs Bailey, Buckland, Lavelle, and others were urging its rejection. Where was Mr Bailey, MLA, standing in the matter? The AWU and other Unions had recently taken a plebiscite on the OBU constitution.
Mr Bailey, MLA, interjected that the industry policy of the AWU was laid down by the Union, and the political policy by the Labor Conference.

Mr Seale: “I’ll show you where you stand. Rule 35 of the constitution of the Australasian Workers’ Union reads: ‘Any member of Parliament who fails to advocate the Preamble and Constitution of the Australasian Workers’ Union shall not be eligible to continue his membership in the Union’. And Rule 43 reads ‘The political policy of the Union shall be the decision of the 1921 All-Australian Trade Union Congress and the 1921 Brisbane Interstate ALP Conference, until altered by the Annual Convention.’”

“Sick and Tired of Trimming”

Mr Seale went on to say that the old objective allowed the politicians to wriggle, but the new objective would prevent their doing this. He was surprised at the action of Mr O’Dea in voting for the new objective at Melbourne and opposing it four months later at Brisbane. The new objective laid it down definitely how the industries were to be managed when socialised. The people were not scared by the Brisbane objective; they were sick and tired of the trimming of the politicians. He protested against the raising of the cry of Australian v anti-Australian. It was as bad as sectarianism.

Should be Reconsidered

The President (Mr J Power, MLC) addressed Conference on the subject. As one of the delegates who voted against the objective at Brisbane, he wanted to put his views before Conference. He was not opposed to it on the grounds that it was too socialistic, nor did he think the Movement would fall to pieces if it were retained. There was no repudiation of the Brisbane objective; only a motion that the Interstate Conference should again consider it. If the Interstate Conference again stood by the new objective he would do his best to justify it. He thought the majority of the States were willing to reconsider it. Some of the States had no time to consider it prior to the Brisbane Conference.

Mr T P Holloway: But four of the State Conferences have endorsed it since.

Mr Power said that if they got the people behind them, it wouldn’t matter if they stood for Socialisation, Communism, Syndicalism, or any other -ism. But they should give the people something they could understand. He wasn’t afraid of what the daily press said, but he wanted to see Labor get into power, and be able to say to the daily press: “If you don’t represent Labor’s position fairly and squarely we’ll close you up in 24 hours.”
**Practical Politics Wanted**

He contended that the objective passed at Brisbane was not the same as was passed by the Melbourne Congress. What right had they to say that 700,000 workers were behind them? It was not true. He questioned very much whether the Brisbane objective would be ratified by the next All-Australian TU Congress. At that very moment a conference of Unions sitting in the Trades Hall was forming a Workers’ Council of Australia – a new party. Was that solidifying the Movement? There was a section that would not have the Labor Movement at any price, though he would say that Mr J Garden had done his best to try and get Labor returned at the last election.

The people wanted practical politics. Today 40,000 men were being degraded because they had not the right to earn a living for themselves and their families. Let them do something for the unemployed instead of talking about a new objective. Until they had exploited the old objective they had no right to talk about a new one. Didn’t they think that if they started to socialise industry the Imperialists and British capitalists would have something to say on the matter? They would not give up their right without a fight, and the workers might have to shoulder something more than a new objective then. He urged delegates to get Labor’s daily press going first to educate the workers. Then they could talk about a new objective as much as they liked.

The debate having closed a vote was taken. All the amendments were defeated, and the motion moved by Mr Gibbons was carried by 97 to 77. Intense excitement prevailed while the vote was being taken.

**Proposed Interstate Conference. Mr A Stewart’s Opinion**

Mr Arch Stewart, Secretary of the Federal ALP Executive, when informed of the result of the voting on the Brisbane objective and the decision to request another Interstate Conference, said: “They have no hope. Already four States have declared in favour of the new objective”.

**NSW Senate Vote. Order of Preference**

A good deal of discussion took place at NSW Labor Conference on a report by the organising committee that the Senate Labor three should be voted 1, 2, 3 in the following order: A McDougall, J Grant and P McGirr. Mr Grant launched a strong objection to this proposal, claiming that under it one man would have a monopoly of votes. He suggested the cutting of the State into three areas. Mr A McDougall favoured the recommendation of the committee. He did not think any harm would happen by voting in the order suggested, while it was obvious that the
Movement in the selection ballots had voted for the candidates in their own order of preference.

After other delegates had expressed their opinion for and against the recommendation of the committee, the report was adopted.

**Day 8, Monday, 12 June 1922**

**Charges and Counter Charges. Investigation Committee’s Report**

On Monday, June 12, the NSW Labor Conference resumed discussion of the items on the agenda paper. Delegates from the Federal Storemen and Packers’ Union sought to censure the Parliamentary Labor Party and the Executive for alleged inactivity in connection with back pay due to members of the Union employed by the Harbor Trust. It was pointed out that the Parliamentary party and the Executive were desirous of having the money paid, and asked that it be paid, but the Harbor Trust refused to pay. As it was working under a special Act, which gave it sole governing powers, the late Labor Government was powerless to interfere. The motion was defeated.

**Black and Tans**

Mr JP Dunn desired to move the suspension of the Standing Orders to move the following motion: “That this Conference enters its emphatic protest against the action of the Federal Government in allowing the Commonwealth immigration officers to become a recruiting ground in the interests of the capitalists of Australia for the purpose of assisting members of the Black and Tans to enter Australia, because the action of these men, when overseas, stinks in the nostrils of decent men and women throughout the world”.

Delegates were of the opinion that already too much time had been wasted in granting suspensions of the Standing Orders, and the motion was defeated.

**Primary Producers and Cooperation**

The following motions were carried after a short discussion:-

“That the control of the restriction of the botanical pest, St John’s Wort, be made a State matter, and that immediate steps be taken to destroy the pest, the cost to be borne by the State”.

“That formation of cooperative societies of all primary producers. Members to be producers from and of the land. The cooperative spirit between the
primary producer and the producer in the industrial field to be fostered. Cooperative distributing centres to be established throughout the world. Cooperative societies to handle from producer to consumer direct. The State Government to advance cooperation through the Rural Bank credit system. Portion of the Friendly Societies’ Act dealing with cooperation to be amended in such a manner as would give cooperative societies power to institute a system of banking within their own movement."

“The creation of a Department of Assay. Prospecting parties to consist of practical miners under a qualified geologist, mineralogist, and assayer. Assistance to all working miners by the establishment of the industry on cooperative principles and the abolition of the present system of speculation.”

“Amendment to Mining Act. That all men using explosives to pass examinations, and hold certificates for use of same; and further, that all works where blasting operations etc., should be in the interests of human life be brought under the Mining Act of NSW, and that all men in charge, where men’s lives are in danger, such men to pass an examination and qualification for same.”

**Labor and the University**

“New Plank – That the Senate Act of the University be amended to provide for a Senate more representative of the people by the inclusion in such Senate of two members of the ALP, and that such members hold office for twelve months. The election of said representatives to be by secret ballot conducted by the ALP Conference.”

“New Plank – That a commission be appointed by the Government for the purpose of revising the education system at present in force in New South Wales.”

**Day 9, Tuesday, 13 June 1922**

**Closer Settlement**

On Tuesday, June 13, Mr Gibbons (Murrumbidgee Electoral Council) moved: “That in the opinion of this Conference the eastern portion of the Western lands of the State should be immediately resumed for the purpose of closer settlement, and that this decision be placed before the Minister for Lands by a deputation”. The motion was carried.

Mr Gibbons also moved the following motion: “That the betterment tax be applied to lands increased in value by the expenditure of Government money on new works such as railways and tramways. The proceeds of such tax to be applied to the loan indebtedness of the Railway and Tramway Department, thereby eventually making cheaper carriage rates possible.” The motion was carried on the voices.
A motion was carried that members of Parliament, together with six delegates from the Conference, should form a deputation to introduce the unemployed to the Ministers of the present Government, and point out the necessity of doing something for the thousands now out of work.

**Single Seats Favoured**

A motion moved by Mr Buckley – “That the proportional representation system be abolished and that the single electorate system be reverted to” – was carried by 77 votes to 35. Mr Buckley also moved “that Conference adopts the suggestions of Mr McGirr to do away with selection ballots and allow all candidates to go to the poll”, which was allowed to stand over.

**Ministers’ Charges and Counter-Charges**

The President (Mr J Power) made an interim report on behalf of the committee appointed by Conference to investigate the charges and counter-charges made by Ministers at previous sessions of the Conference. The committee had met three times, and had considered evidence submitted by Messrs Loughlin, Mutch and Lazzarini. Mr McGirr did not appear before the committee. He stated that he did not intend to make any statement or take part in any inquiry before a committee which contained two persons who were prejudiced against him. Mr McGirr’s statement was confirmed by letter, setting out that he objected to Messrs Lavelle and Magrath sitting on the committee on the ground that they were personal enemies.

After some discussion Mr Pinder moved a motion – “That the interim report be received, and the committee instructed to proceed with the inquiry and bring down a report to Conference as soon as possible.”

**Day 11, Thursday, 15 June 1922**

**Opposition to Two Members of Committee**

On June 15 there was a lengthy debate on the matter. An amendment was moved by Mr Stein: “That the Conference select two other members of the committee in the place of Messrs Lavelle and Magrath”.

Mr Magrath, in the course of a lengthy statement, denied that he was prejudiced against Mr McGirr. He knew of no reason for Mr McGirr’s hostility towards him. Members of the committee were not concerned about either side, but it did desire to get at the truth of the matter. Personally he did not care whether he was on the committee or not, but
he considered it unfair on the part of Mr McGirr to make such a statement without coming to Conference to back it up.

Mr Lavelle, MHR, also denied any bias towards Mr McGirr. He contended that as he had been elected by Conference to sit on the committee, he intended to remain there until he was displaced by the Conference. He thought the objection raised by Mr McGirr was a deliberate attempt to prevent Conference dealing with a report from the committee. Even if he had any personal feeling in the matter, he would not have allowed it to prejudice his position on the committee.

Mr McGirr’s Right

Mr Brown (Ryde) thought it was a pity that the whole business had ever come before Conference. As to Mr McGirr’s right to object, delegates had to remember that in any court a criminal had the right to challenge the jury. Any member of Parliament, whose charges were being investigated, surely had the same right. He favoured the whole question being referred to the disputes committee or a special committee appointed by the incoming Executive. He did not think the committee could bring in a report before the end of Conference.

Mr JP Dunn protested against the time of Conference being wasted. There was a lengthy agenda paper to be dealt with, and they should get on with that business. He favoured the amendment moved by Mr Brown, with the addendum: “That all Leagues, Unions and Labor newspapers be given a full report of the finding of the committee”. Mr Mostyn thought the right time to object to any members of the committee was when they were being elected. If the matter was side-tracked the rank and file outside would consider that dirty work had been done. The matter should not be cloaked. Delegates wanted to hear the result of the investigation.

Conference Should Hear Mr McGirr

Mr T Bartle suggested that Mr McGirr should be invited to attend Conference, state his objections to Messrs Lavelle and Magrath, and if Conference considered the objections valid two more delegates should be elected to the committee. He was not barracking for Mr McGirr, but held that he was entitled to raise any objection he had. Mr Roberts (Fed. Storemen and Packers) did not think there was anything to justify an alteration of the committee.

Mr Dalley (Municipal Employees) accused Mr Lavelle of bias against Mr McGirr. He also suggested that Mr Magrath, whom he claimed was a close friend of Mr Catts, was prejudiced against Mr McGirr. He hoped the Conference would select two other members of the committee. Mr Magrath, in a personal explanation, denied that he was a member of the
P and O organisation, while Mr Lavelle said that Mr Dalley’s accusation against him was unfounded. Mr O’Brien, MLA, thought that if the two delegates objected to did not resign of their own free will Conference should remove them. He also suggested that Mr Lavelle was biased against Mr McGirr. McGirr was the only Minister who had the courage to stand up to the Board of Trade and override any of his under-strappers in the departments when they conflict with the interests of the workers. Had Labor won the elections the other Ministers would have been falling over themselves in their praise for him. But now Labor was defeated they were turning on him like a pack of dingoes.

After Messrs Hutchison, Baddeley, O’Dea, Rogan and Bramston had spoken, the motion was carried. The various amendments were defeated on the voices.

**Preselection Ballots**

The debate was resumed on a motion by the Lithgow League: “That Conference adopts the suggestion of Mr McGirr to do away with pre-selection ballots and allow all candidates to go to the polls”. Mr Ryan, speaking to the motion, claimed that if all the candidates had gone to the poll at the last election Labor would have been in a better position. Under proportional representation it did not matter how many candidates went to the poll. The final choice would remain with the people. He said that seats had been lost at the last elections owing to the preselection ballots.

In answer to Mr C Last, the President (Mr Power) ruled that if the motion was carried it would operate at once in connection with all Federal, State and municipal elections. Mr McGarry moved an amendment: “That preselection ballots be abolished in all elections conducted under the proportional representation system”. If the single electorate system were brought into operation again the motion would result in Labor candidates cutting one another’s throats for the one seat. His amendment would prevent that being done. Under the present system the more candidates they had in the field the better, as each would bring a personal following to support the Labor cause.

**More Intrigue Possible**

Mr McTiernan, MLA, was opposed to the motion, but considered Mr McGarry’s amendment a good one. He asked them to think what would happen if the single seat system came into operation again if the motion was carried. They had to remember, too, that if preselection was abolished, there would be the same appeals to sectional interests, and the worst elements of sectarianism would be introduced. No matter how
many candidates ran under the present system, it would be impossible to split the ticket, if all voted solid for Labor.

Mr E Cross (Letter Carriers) was opposed to both motion and amendment. They would lead to intrigue, and open the way to opportunists. He was willing for all candidates having an ‘open go’, but not that there should be no restriction on the number of candidates running.

**Would Affect Organisation**

Mr T Arthur thought that such a resolution, if carried, would tend to undermine the organisation. The elections cost money to run, and the funds had to come from the Leagues and Unions. If there was an ‘open go’ for all, there would be no need for Unions to contribute under Rule 6. They could come in under Rule 18, and the Movement would lose thousands of pounds.

Mr W O’Brien, MLA, also opposed both motion and amendment. The proportional system allowed parties to spring up and defeat Labor. The motion and amendment would make it confusion worse confounded. Wealthy men in the Movement would have a bigger “pull” over the electors than men without wealth. It was playing into the hands of wealth and privilege.

Mr J Grant claimed that the preselection ballots caused much trouble in the Movement. The Executive would be well advised to ascertain the number of candidates who could get elected, and only endorse that number. It was suicidal to endorse more men than the number of possible vacancies. He was against the principle of seeking out one man and giving him the No.1 vote. He was not going to sit down under the “outrage” perpetration in the Conference the other night in connection with the Senate ballot. Each man selected should be given an equal area in each electorate.

**Faults of Preselection**

Mr J Lynch (AWU) submitted a further amendment: “That all Labor candidates duly qualified be allowed to contest all future State elections, without preselection, while the present system of voting pertains”. He had seen enough under preselection in the past to condemn it. Candidates who went out vilifying one another should be put out of the Movement.

The Acting-President (Mr G Buckland) suggested that the amendments should be coordinated, and moved in the terms of the last amendment. This was agreed to. The next speaker (Mr J White) then moved an addendum to this amendment: “Providing each candidate’s nomination paper is signed by 100 members of Leagues or affiliated
Unions”. He held that the people should decide who was to be their member in Parliament. Seats were lost to Labor because candidates were foisted on to the electors to whom the electors were opposed. Mr O'Dea hoped that Conference would stand by the preselection ballots.

Why Decent Men Won’t Nominate

Mr RJ Stuart-Robertson, MLA, (Balmain), moved a further amendment: “Should proportional representation be retained by the ALP, Branches in each quota area of the electorate should elect its own candidate”. Mr W Colbourne suggested that both motion and amendment should be turned down. Mr M Swiney favoured preselection ballots. If individuals were placed higher than the Movement dry-rot would set in. Mr M Burke supported the amendment moved by Mr White. It would ensure that only genuine Laborites would be selected as candidates. The present system of selection was bad and sooner or later the Movement would be up against it. Honest people were refusing to offer themselves for selection because the method of selection was putrid.

Mr AE O'Brien moved a further amendment: “That suggestions be invited from members of the Movement for a better method of selection, and the Executive prepare a report on the matter for submission to the next Conference.”

At this stage a count of delegates was taken, and as there were not 100 present the Acting-President said it would be quite futile to continue the debate. A vote on the adjournment showed that 100 delegates had voted, at which there was an uproar. In the babel of voices that ensued, the Acting-president left the chair, and Conference adjourned.

Day 13, Saturday, 17 June 1922

Late Shopping Night

Conference met again on Saturday afternoon at 2.30 pm. Mr E O'Dea (Shop Assistants) secured the suspension of the standing orders, and moved the following motion, which was carried unanimously: “That the Early Closing Act be amended and made to apply to the whole State, the abolition of late shopping night, and with hours fixed as from 9 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday, and noon on Saturday”.

Another motion authorising the printing of new rule books with all alterations or additions made up to date was also carried.

Disorder prevailed when Mr AW Buckley demanded that the debate be resumed on the question of abolishing preselection ballots, which was brought to an abrupt conclusion on the previous night. The Acting-
Chairman (Mr Buckland) said that the business had lapsed the previous night and could not be further debated. Mr Buckley disagreed with this, and moved dissent. The motion of dissent from the Chairman’s ruling was carried, and Conference was in an uproar. Some delegates claimed that there were not 100 delegates present; others demanded a count. Several counts took place, finally establishing the fact that there were at least 100 delegates present.

**Conference in an Uproar**

While the confusion was at its highest, Mr C Last moved: “That the Conference adjourn sine die”. A wild scene followed, and after some difficulty a vote taken showed that the motion was defeated. Loud cheers greeted the announcement. The debate was then resumed on the question of preselection ballots. The Conference hall commenced to thin out. Finally the amendment moved by Mr J White, “That all Labor candidates duly qualified be allowed to contest all future State elections, without preselection, while the present voting system pertains, and that it should be necessary for such candidate to obtain not less than 100 signatures to his nomination of bona fide members of Labor Leagues or affiliated Unions”, was carried. However, as only 88 delegates voted the Chairman ruled that the motion was not constitutionally carried. Uproar again prevailed, and in the excitement the Chairman adjourned the Conference till 7 pm.

**The Ryan v “Mercury” Lawsuit**

Conference resumed at 8 pm, with the President (Mr J Power) in the chair. Mr Dalley moved the following motion, which was carried: “That congratulations be sent to Mrs TJ Ryan, widow of the late TJ Ryan, on the success of her lawsuit against the Hobart Mercury, and her persistence in clearing up the stigma on her late husband’s name”.

Mr Buckley again sought to have the question of preselection ballots brought before the Conference. The President ruled that it could not be done. Mr Buckley moved dissent. The president said he had no power to move dissent. Finally the matter was cut short by a delegate moving that Mr Buckley be no longer heard.

**Caucus Secrecy Attacked**

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA (Balmain), moved: “That a complete record be kept of Caucus meetings and division lists on policy matters, so that a report could be furnished at each annual Conference.” He claimed that there should be no secrets in the Movement. Caucus at present was a kind of Star Chamber. Some matters did leak out of the Caucus room, but
were often distorted. If a correct record were kept it would prevent distortion.

Mr Brotherson (Federated Storemen and Packers) seconded the motion, and said that it was necessary if only to put an end to the rumours flying round concerning Ministers and members of the party. They wanted honest men in Parliament, and this motion would help them.

Mr McTiernan, MLA, opposed the motion. The Caucus was a deliberative body, and any proposal submitted to Caucus not in accordance with the principles of Labor would be out of order, and Caucus would have no jurisdiction to deal with it. Caucus was an assembly of members meeting to analyse matters to mould them into the most effective shape for submission to the House. A man’s loyalty did not consist of what he said in Caucus, where there were always differences of opinion as to methods, but in how he kept his pledge on the floor of the House. What a member did in Caucus was no criterion at all. It was introducing a dangerous precedent, and it would be the easiest thing in the world for people who were supposed to be faithless to evade this new rule. It would mean that informal meetings would be held to decide what would be done in Caucus.

**Time for Open Diplomacy**

Mr T Arthur wanted the motion altered to include the Central Executive, while Mr JP Dunn moved a further addition, “That all Caucus meetings be attended by an Executive officer”.

Mr H Brown (Ryde) thought it was time they got down to open diplomacy, while Mr T Mutch, MLA, proposed that all representative Labor bodies should keep a record of all divisions arrived at. Mr Mutch was suggesting that some action should be taken against the secret intrigueurs who came into the Conference, but did not open their mouths, when the debate was cut short by the President announcing that he proposed to make a statement regarding the charges and counter-charges of Labor ex-Ministers.

**Investigating Committee’s Report**

The Committee’s report was of an inconclusive nature. It did not sustain any of the charges made by Mr McGirr, yet on the other hand it maintained that Mr McGirr may have had reasonable grounds for the assumption of his doubts. An application for a copy of the Committee’s report was refused. No report was issued to *The Worker* for publication.

In moving the adoption of the report, the President (Mr Power) said this was a time for burying the hatchet for ever, and every attempt should be made to prevent a repetition of this business in the future. It was a pity that when the matter first started action had not been taken by
the Parliamentary Party to stop it. He hoped that such action would be taken in the future if the occasion arose.

Mr O’Dea moved that the question be put. This was the signal for an uproar which lasted some time. Eventually the motion to put the question was defeated. Disorder prevailed as speakers for and against the report attempted to make themselves heard. Mrs Dwyer wanted to know who was responsible for reducing the women’s basic wage. It was reduced on December 21, two days after Mr Kavanagh assumed office as Minister for Labor and Industry.

**Adoption Opposed**

Mr Hutchison, who was one of the members of the inquiring committee, explained at some length the various points of the report. He, too, thought that the Parliamentary Party should have settled the quarrel before the elections took place. Mrs Bailey opposed the adoption of the report on the ground that it was too much like “a Scotch explanation”. There was nothing to convince her that the hatchet would be buried. Some Ministers could not say anything dirty enough against their colleagues. She contended that the ‘Majority Labor Party’, led by Catts, was behind a lot of the dirty work. She moved an amendment that it be referred to the incoming Executive for further consideration.

Mr W Colbourne claimed that the 15 members of the party who voted to send the basic wage report back to the Board of Trade were opposed to the £4/5/- rate. He wanted to know why the report did not disclose the names of those men so that delegates could see who they were. He also wanted to know why ten men had been absent from the Caucus room when the decision was made.

**Was McGirr “Crucified”?**

Mr T Arthur wanted to know why the Committee didn’t look into the reason why McGirr was put in charge of the Department of Labor and Industry – a department that he knew nothing about. He contended that the other Ministers were aware of the Statistician’s cost of living figures and desired to bring odium on McGirr’s head as Minister. The fact that Mr McGirr was the only Minister preventing the basic wage declaration being put into operation showed where other Ministers stood in the matter. Every one of them should have been standing solidly behind McGirr.

Mr V Molesworth, MLA, said that in voting to send the declaration back to the Board of Trade for review, members contended that if it was computed by the same method as in the previous year the wage would have been £4/6/4. It was to try and get it computed by the usual method that he and fourteen others voted to send it back.
Mr E Clear, in a long speech, deprecated the time of Conference being wasted on such a matter. It was an insult to country members.

Conference Adjourns

Mr Gallagher (Tramway Union) wanted to know who was responsible for going behind Mr McGirr’s back in getting the basic wage declaration to the Government printer, also who was responsible for allowing an officer of the Board of Trade to appear in the Industrial Court to certify that the Board had made a lower wage declaration. Those things were not mentioned in the report.

Mr Dalley contended that the fact that some members of the Parliamentary Party were against Parliament fixing the basic wage justified Mr McGirr’s charges.

Miss O’Sullivan said the report was too incomplete for Conference to adopt. There should be a further inquiry.

Finally, amid uproar, the amendment was carried, and Conference adjourned sine die.

Several matters dealt with at Conference appear under different headings in other parts of the paper.

Ex-Premier Dooley at Conference

Mr J Dooley, MLA, ex-Premier and leader of the NSW State Parliamentary Labor Party, put in an appearance before NSW Labor Conference on June 14, and was given a splendid reception by delegates.

Mr Dooley, in the course of a lengthy address, dealt with Labor’s defeat in the recent elections. He said he could not discover any action on his part that could be construed as a cause for Labor’s defeat. The Government faced a set of circumstances unparalleled in the history of the political life of the State. Labor appealed to the people with one of the best programmes ever submitted, yet it was turned down. It was true that there were many influences at work outside the Party ranks, but when they remembered the position within the Movement the cause of defeat was not far to seek.

The ex-Premier scathingly attacked members of the IWW who, though released by the Labor Government under Mr Storey, immediately turned round and assailed the Labor Movement. That was poor gratitude. The Government had also introduced the 44-hour week, believing it to be the logical interpretation of what eight hours really meant, yet a big section of the workers who benefited from this humane legislation immediately turned against Labor when the ‘Nationalists’ raised the sectarian issue.
Willing to Retire any Time

Mr Dooley stressed the need for honesty, straightforwardness, and consciousness on the part of all members of the Movement. If candidates for Parliament lived up to those qualifications there would be nothing to fear. One thing that Labor could say was that no member of the recent Government could be accused of having pecuniarily benefited himself, or of ever having trafficked in the great Labor cause. Referring to his own position as leader, Mr Dooley added that he was prepared to retire from his position at any time should the Movement consider another leader should be appointed, and loyally follow the man selected as leader by the Movement.
CHAPTER 7

Australian Labor Party, 
New South Wales Branch 
Annual Conference, 2 - 13 June 1923

Report in The Australian Worker

This is the NSW ALP washing its dirty linen in public. Factional warfare reached a very bitter level in 1923, and this Conference is remarkable for replacing the AWU-dominated Executive with one dominated by a group of more radical unions led by the Miners’ Federation. An enormous amount of Conference time was occupied in discussing electoral malpractice allegedly overseen by the AWU. The reader will learn more about the technology of ballot boxes with sliding panels than about changes in Labor Party policies. Labor Party corruption had been one of the most important issues in the 1922 NSW election, with repeated allegations of Tammany Hall bossism, intimidation and ballot rigging. Federal MP, JH Catts, had denounced the State Executive in the Commonwealth Parliament, while NSW parliamentary leader, James Dooley, also publicly accused the Executive of corrupt practices. The Executive responded by expelling both from the party, and imposing AWU supporter, Greg McGirr, as leader of the NSW Labor Caucus. The direct result of this infighting was intervention in the NSW Branch by the Federal Executive in April 1923. Its decision was to leave the resolution of issues to this Annual Conference, although significantly offering no support for McGirr’s leadership of Caucus. It imposed WF Dunn, Dooley’s deputy-leader, as the interim leader of the parliamentary party. (The documents of Federal intervention are reproduced here.)

The interesting question to ask is how the AWU, so strongly entrenched in power in Sussex Street, and with all the levers of factional control in its hands, could lose control of the Annual Conference. (That was not a mistake that its successor, the Trades Hall faction backing Lang would repeat.) In most years an appeal to the Federal Executive would favour the AWU, which was strongly represented in most other States. But not in 1923, where the Federal Executive left the ultimate decisions to State Conference, while taking control of credentialling delegates beforehand. The crucial organising was conducted in the Labor Council, led by the Miners’ Federation; it mobilised a majority of delegates opposed to
the AWU and, with the help of the Brisbane Federal Conference (based on decisions made at the 1921 All Australian Trades Union Congress), achieved the readmission to the party of many radicals who had split from the party in 1919, including Albert Willis and Communist Jock Garden. The fundamental reason for the successful mobilisation was that the smell of Bailey’s AWU machine was so rank that even many of its former allies could not tolerate it. Even The Worker, the AWU’s own paper, was very critical of the State Executive, as was Federal MP and member of the AWU, Arthur Blakeley. Thus, recourse to even further manipulation of ballots and delegates would only have worsened the situation. Without the metropolitan and mining unions and branches being at least divided among themselves the AWU had no chance. That left the so-called ‘Trades Hall Reds’ in control of the Executive – along with a Caucus led by John Thomas Lang, with the support of Trades Hall.

The leading figures of Lang’s faction in the 1923 Executive, who took the presidential and vice-presidential positions, were Albert Willis (Miners’ Federation), Edward Magrath (Printing Trades) and James Tyrrell (Municipal Workers’ Union). The Secretary was William Carey (Water & Sewerage Employees Association). Although the faction depended upon a coalition of trade unions for its survival, one observation should be made about these men – each was unchallengeable in his own union base. Nor were they ‘red’. They were union bosses, not mere delegates. Once in power they could command loyalty from union members so that it is best to regard the faction as led by a group of very strong individual men rather than as a coalition of trade unions. This fact makes it even more remarkable that for the next ten or fifteen years they (and other equally powerful figures who joined them, such as Jock Garden or John Beasley) would succumb to the influence of an even stronger individual – John Thomas Lang.
Federal Intervention in the NSW Branch, ALP

(The Australian Worker, 25 April 1923)

NSW Labor Dispute.
State and Federal Executives Issue Joint Statement

Following on the intervention of the Federal Executive into the dispute between the New South Wales Labor Executive and the Parliamentary Party, and the decisions arrived at, the following official statement has been issued to leaguers and affiliated unions by the two Executives:

In view of the feelings in the minds of supporters of Labor in all the States re the disunity prevalent in the State of New South Wales, and the many requests received for intervention, the Federal Executive of the Australian Labor Party, in conjunction with the New South Wales State Executive, has met.

It is agreed that discipline must be observed in the Movement. To that end it has earnestly desired that all Laborites will loyally abide by the decisions arrived at. It was urged that the Federal Executive take the management of the June Conference out of the hands of the State Executive. Without investigating the statements made it was decided that all matters in dispute should be determined by the forthcoming New South Wales State Conference. The following procedure was agreed to:

(1) The New South Wales Executive is prepared to give every assurance to the Federal Executive that no obstacle will be placed in the way of a free and open Conference, and agrees to appoint a committee, consisting of one representative appointed by the majority of the State Executive and one representative appointed by the minority of the State Executive, with a Chairman appointed by the Federal Executive. Such Committee to decide all matters in dispute relative to the convening of the next New South Wales State Conference, and to certify to the correctness of the credentials of the delegates appointed to same.

(2) All branches shall be instructed that they must reconstitute themselves on a pre-dispute basis for the purpose of electing delegates to Conference. No new branch or members thereof established from date hereto shall be permitted to participate in the selection of a representative to the Conference.

(3) The Parliamentary Party to function as one body under the Deputy-Leader elected by the Parliamentary Party at its presessional meeting.
(4) That Mr Dooley have the right to appeal to Conference. The decision of Conference to be final.
(5) That the Federal President, Federal Vice-President, and Federal Secretary attend the New South Wales State Conference as official representatives of the Federal Executive.
(6) That Mr A Stewart be appointed Chairman of the Committee referred to in paragraph 1 hereof.

We sincerely trust that organisations will fall into line in a spirit of unity to give the best effects of the forthcoming Conference to the Movement in Australia. All are invited to come together in a spirit of harmony and toleration to restore that unity which is essential to the progress of the Movement towards that destiny which is the ultimate goal of Labor throughout the world.

With that end in view we appeal to all sections of the Movement to bring their differences to Conference rather than indulge in recriminations that must inevitably end in the disintegration of the Movement.

(Signed)
R Sumner, President, Federal Executive
John M Power, Pres. NSW Branch, ALP
Arch Stewart, Sec., Federal Executive, ALP
W Carey, Secretary, NSW Branch, ALP

Further Statement by NSW President

The following further statement has been issued to members of the NSW Branch of the Australian Labor Party by the President of the NSW State Executive:

“In accordance with the joint decisions of the Federal and State Executives, it is desirable that in all cases where differences have arisen in connection with the selection or delegates to the Annual State Conference, further activity should be suspended pending advice upon the matter. A clear statement of the circumstances in any electorate made to headquarters will secure full information. In the meantime all should bury the hatchet.”

State Executive Meets

At a meeting of the State Executive, held last Friday night, a motion was carried instructing Mr Dunn, temporary leader of the NSW Parliamentary Labor Party, to convene a meeting of the Party and secure an assurance from all member of the Party of their loyalty to the decisions of the State Executive. It was contended by those opposed to the motion that such a procedure was not warranted, and could only be suggested for the purpose of causing further friction between the State Executive and the Parliamentary Party.
Editor of “Worker” Attacked

Mr Thick secured the suspension of the standing orders to move that Mr HE Boote (editor of The Worker) be requested to appear before the Executive to give an explanation regarding various statements published in The Worker in regard to the Labor dispute. Despite the fact that it was pointed out that the Executive had no control over The Worker, the motion was carried.

Should Party Meeting Be Held?

Members of the Parliamentary Party, referring to the action of the Executive in instructing Mr Dunn to call a Caucus meeting, assert that there is absolutely no necessity for the calling of a meeting of the Caucus, and that the instructions to Mr Dunn can only be for the purpose of trying to humiliate Mr Dooley. They claim, further, that the Executive has no power to order a Party meeting. Should Mr Dunn decide to call a Party meeting there is a feeling that he will find the majority of members hostile to him, who would have it in their power to adjourn the meeting without transacting any business desired by the Executive. The majority of the Parliamentary members are averse to any meeting being called at the present time.

Mr Dooley's Comments

Mr J Dooley, commenting upon the question of leadership, made the following statement at the weekend:

“As the statements in the press regarding the leadership and deputy leadership seem to be clouded, I think it is advisable to explain clearly the position. The Federal Executive decision not to interfere with the leadership of the Party is made abundantly clear in clause 3 of the agreement. The word ‘deputy leader’ is used not by accident, but intentionally. The Federal Executive realised that the position regarding the leadership and deputy leadership is entirely in the hands of the Parliamentary Party. The deputy leader may act for the leader at any time, and under the instructions and directions of the leader. No outside body has the right to give instructions to the deputy leader. The Parliamentary Party, and that alone, can give him instructions.”

The Terms of Settlement

Commenting upon the terms of settlement arrived at by the Federal and State Executives, Messrs Lang and Loughlin, two of the spokesmen for the Parliamentary Party before the Federal Executive, have issued the following statement:
“The decision only became available on Friday evening, and there has been no opportunity since then to have it considered by members, but it seems to be generally acceptable to our side.

“The recognition of Mr Dooley and his followers, and of Mr Dunn as deputy leader, goes about as far as it is possible to go to bring the Party back to a pre-dispute basis until Conference has declared itself on the issue.

“The request for a full Conference has been met by the enfranchisement of the affected leagues without their being obliged to undergo the humiliation of rescinding their resolutions, while a clean Conference has been reasonably assured by the placing of all league matters relating to the election of Conference delegates under the control of a committee with a Federal chairman.

**Work for the Future**

“The Movement’s right to express itself having thus been protected by the Federal intervention, we can now proceed with our work with every hope of ultimate success. The causes of the dissensions and recriminations, which have been noticeable in the Movement for the past couple of years, must be unrelentingly traced and ruthlessly removed, to prevent any recurrence of the prevailing trouble. This urgent need for a radical investigation and subsequent treatment of root causes must not be sidetracked by the minor question of leadership, or by subtle suggestions that the principle of Executive control within the Constitution is at stake.

“An honest facing of our difficulties now will remove the possibility of future dissensions and schisms, and will enable the Party to act unitedly and energetically in the interests of the people for whose benefit the Movement was organised. Our thanks are due to the Federal Executive, whose work has brought the hope of better days for Labor in this State.”
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1922

(The Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

[Note that, after discussion in conference, significant parts of this Executive Report were not accepted. For example, the section headed “Dooley, Gardiner and Charlton Circular” was rejected and two paragraphs from a minority report substituted.]

Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, Executive Report, 1922

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 32nd Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is hereby submitted for your consideration.

New Branches

During the year new branches have been formed and old branches resuscitated at the following centres: Homebush, Flemington, Strathfield, Oaklands, Newlands, North Auburn, Gerringong, Boolaroo, Sylvania, Brewarrina, Summer Hill, Dora Creek, Lambton, Coolamon, Wee Waa, Lyndhurst, Nambucca, Darlington, St Peters, Epping, Merrylands, North Ryde, East Maitland, Coolac, Linbourn, Rose Bay, Mogriguy, Thirroul, Howlong, Austinmere, Galong, Murrurundi, Gunnedah, Lightning Ridge, Manilla, Crookwell, Balldale, Cumnock, Newtown East, Camdenville, Ulmarra, Urana, Werris Creek, Harden, Narulen, Manildra, Undercliff, South Lidcombe, Cronulla, Rosebery, Blayney, Portland, Walgett.

The following unions have also affiliated under Rule 18 and Rule 6:-

Rule 18: Federated Iron Workers, Saddlery Trades; Rule 6:-Trolly and Draymen.

Executive Meetings

During the year the Executive have held 33 meetings, including special meetings. The personnel of the Executive was altered in consequence of members nominating for selection for members of Parliament, and having to resign in accordance with the Rules, alternate members taking their places.

Deaths of Members

Since Conference last assembled the Movement has lost the services of that sterling old battler, Jabez Wright, member for Sturt. The sad news of Mr Wright’s demise was received with profound regret throughout the
Labor Movement, to the advancement of which he had practically devoted the whole of his life.

**Sturt Vacancy**

The vacancy caused by the death of Mr Wright has been filled by the election of Mr E Horsington, the next highest Labor candidate in the last ballot in 1922 in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act.

**Disintegrating Influences**

Immediately subsequent to the close of last Conference allegations of corrupt practices in connection with the Movement were circulated in the columns of the press, and anonymously, which resulted in the Parliamentary Party and Executive holding joint meetings for the purpose of allowing any member who desired to make definite charges and substantiate them. An invitation was extended to place all such charges in writing before the Executive, and a committee was appointed consisting of Messrs JM Power, C Last, and HL Brown, to prepare a report for presentation to Conference. The report is as follows:

**Report of Committee re Conference with Members of Parliament in September Last**

To Members of the Executive

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During August and September last a press campaign came into evidence, and had every appearance of being intended to further disrupt the Labor Movement.

Almost daily reports appeared in regard to meetings of the Parliamentary Party, setting out statements alleged to have been made by members of Parliament, which seriously reflected upon the Executive and upon the Movement generally.

The Executive was anxious to avoid further conflict, which could only have had a harmful effect upon the cause of Labor, and, therefore, refrained from replying or making any statement through the press. It was confidently felt that the reports would be promptly repudiated by the Party as untrue.

After waiting a considerable time, however, no such repudiation or explanation was forthcoming from the Party, and the Executive was therefore compelled to believe that the Party was prepared to take the responsibility for such statements.

Notwithstanding this failure by the MsP to do the fair and decent thing through the press, the Executive still refrained from public controversy, and invited the Parliamentary Party to meet it and repeat the statements or make charges if they were prepared to do so.
It is regrettable that a very poor response was made to this invitation, as at the first meeting only about one-third of the members attended, whilst at following meetings their attendances were practically nil.

The members completely failed to submit any definite charge or make any suggestion worthy of note that would assist the Movement, and the Committee is forced to the conclusion that the whole incident is more the outcome of personal feeling within the Party than of a well-judged attempt to place the interest of the Movement first.

The Committee also recommends that this statement, if adopted, be incorporated in the annual report to Conference.

(Signed) Harry L Brown, JM Power, C Last
Members of Committee.

Selections: Cook, Werriwa, Reid

Many statements made regarding the conduct of selection ballots in the press, and in Federal Hansards, caused the Executive to take greater care in safeguarding the integrity of such ballots, and upon allegations of corrupt practices in connection with the Cook, Werriwa and Reid selection ballots being made, an exhaustive examination of the circumstances surrounding these ballots was undertaken, with the result that each was declared null and void, and a selection by secret ballot of the Executive was taken; in each case the candidate selected by the Executive won the seat by huge majorities, which in itself shows that the electors appreciated the action of the Executive in their efforts to preserve the purity of the ballot.

Result of Federal Elections

For the first time since the great betrayal of 1916, the Australian Labor Party is again the strongest party in the House of Representatives, though still nine short of a majority over all other parties. At the last general elections 25 pledged Labor men were returned, and on this occasion the number is 29. Of the previous 25 three went back on their pledge, two of them ratting to anti-Labor, and none of these got back. They were Considine, Higgs and Catts. All three have been beaten by official Labor candidates.

In this State we captured the new electorate of Reid, which compensated us for the wiping out of the Barrier electorate. We also took Barton, a new electorate, from Hector Lamond. Reid was won by Mr Percy Coleman and Barton by Mr FA Macdonald. New South Wales has returned three new members to represent Labor, the third being Mr EC Riley, whose outing of JH Catts for Cook was perhaps the most popular victory in Australia. To new and old standard-bearers who have won seats, Labor's congratulations are tendered.
Labor captured two seats in the Senate and with a satisfactory poll would have got all three. The defeat of Josiah Thomas for the Senate and of Hector Lamond in the House of Representatives leaves WM Hughes the only representative of the 1916 breakaway still in Parliament. Next election we hope to settle Senator Duncan, who joined the Nationalists later.

**The Catts Party**

JH Catts, who long had been under grave suspicion, took his expulsion from the Labor Movement keenly. He made the most bitter assertions against men with whom he had been associated for many years. The anti-Labor press took him up, but he and his anti-Labor colleagues failed miserably. The Catts Party ran six candidates for the House of Representatives, and one for the Senate. Every one of them but JH Catts himself lost the deposit, and the whole seven of them were at the bottom of their respective polls.

**Mr Charlton's Health**

The illness of Mr Charlton in the middle of the election campaign came as a shock to the Movement throughout Australia. The success of his operation was most gratifying to the people.

**Calare and Macquarie**

Although Labor won new ground in this State, our advantages were discounted by the loss of Calare and Macquarie. The poor attention paid by Messrs T Lavelle and S Nicholls (the beaten members) to their Parliamentary duties lost us the seats, which we may have trouble to regain, and certainly cannot recover until the next general elections. In the interests of the Movement there should placed in the Constitution of the Australian Labor Party machinery to deal with unsatisfactory representatives. It is necessary that we shall insist upon proper service being rendered, and that the retention of the official endorsement shall be dependent upon such requirements being met completely.

**To Organise Electorates. What Federal Members May Do**

It is in the power of every Federal member to discover who did and who did not vote at the last elections. Under the Federal Act, the checked rolls of the returning officers, showing the ticks against the names of all who used the franchise, may be inspected, and the ticks copied into the clear roll belonging to the member. From this it will be seen where the non-voters are, and just who require to be organised. Of course, members cannot do the door-knocking themselves; they have their duty. But they can provide workers in the Labor Movement with marked rolls so that
voters may be followed up, and instructed as to why they should take
the trouble to cast their ballot.

**Anti-Labor Press Propaganda**

Nationalism having disgusted the people of Australia, the only possible
hope it had of making a figure was to brand other parties as equally
black. The anti-Labor press clutched at everything possible to infer that
there was trouble within the ranks of the ALP. The Catts stuff was
wallowed in, the selection ballot protests (lodged under the rules and
regulations of the Party) were used to misrepresent the Party as split and
rent by internecine strife.

**Dooley, Gardiner and Charlton Circular**

As soon as the Federal elections were over Messrs Dooley, Gardiner and
Charlton issued to the
branches and unions a circular without the
knowledge of the Executive, which appeared to attack the Executive’s
conduct of the campaign and reflect on the integrity of members. The
first intimation the Executive received was through the columns of the
daily press. So serious did the position seem to the Executive that s
steps were immediately taken to obtain an explanation of their action, and the
following report was forwarded to members of branches and unions in
connection therewith:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Executive desires to state that it has carefully investigated and con-
sidered the circular issued over the names of Messrs Charlton, Gardiner,
and Dooley, and begs to report as follows:

The Committee arrived at the conclusion that any evil likely to arise from
the circular would be caused by the press interpretation thereof, and any
agreement in the minds of members of the Movement or the public
therewith.

It was therefore deemed advisable to have a statement from the signatories
to the circular on the point.

The communication to these gentlemen and their replies are herewith
submitted, and the Executive decided that a copy be forwarded to all
branches and unions throughout the State, and that these bodies be advised
that the best interests of the Movement would be served by discussing the
proposals in the light of these replies, ignoring entirely press interpretation
and deductions.

**Copy of Letter Forwarded to Messrs Charlton, Gardiner, and Dooley**

“As gentlemen,

“As you are no doubt aware, the circular recently issued to branches over
your names has given rise to much comment in the press, and has caused
considerable discussion and some resentment in the Movement.
“The press endeavors to convey the impression that the circular contains inferences and innuendoes reflecting upon the Executive, and is intended as a challenge to that body.

“Senator Gardiner attended a meeting of the Executive and definitely repudiated such interpretation, and as there is a good deal of opinion being expressed to the effect that the deductions made by the press are not unreasonable, the Executive would be pleased to have a statement from you in regard to the matter.

“Such statement would probably assist to clarify the position, and would tend towards an avoidance of further rupture.”

Copy of the Hon Matt Charlton’s Reply

“Dear Sir,

“Yours of the 9th instant duly to hand re recent circular issued to branches and unions, signed by Senator Gardiner, J Dooley, and myself.

“I desire to state that I had no intention of reflecting on the Executive or any member of same – my only object was to make recommendations for consideration, with a view of strengthening the Movement. I regret that my state of health, which is gradually improving, does not permit me attending the Executive meeting. This would be more satisfactory. I fully realise the great responsibility cast upon the Executive in controlling a great movement like ours, and I desire to convey my appreciation of the manner in which it cooperated with myself, as Leader of the Federal Party, in the conduct of the recent campaign.

Yours fraternally,
M Charlton

Copy of Senator A Gardiner’s Reply

“Dear Sir,

“The circular to leagues and unions signed by me, in conjunction with my colleagues, Messrs Charlton and Dooley, was not intended (as interpreted by the press) as a charge of corruption against the Executive or any member of the Executive. And therefore I stand by every sentence in the circular.

“The utter lack of organisation noticeable everywhere prompted the issue of that call to leagues and unions to remodel the Constitution, so that we may remove disputes within the Movement, and secure in our own ranks something approaching the harmony that is shown in the forces opposing us.

Yours fraternally,
Albert Gardiner”

Copy of Hon James Dooley’s Reply

“Dear Sir,

“I wish to make it absolutely clear that in signing the circular in conjunction with my colleagues, Messrs Charlton and Gardiner, I did not charge the
Executive, nor any member thereof, with corruption, neither did I mean to convey or infer any such charge. My sole object in issuing the circular was that, in my opinion, some of the suggestions, if not all, would be for the advancement and improvement of our Movement.

Yours faithfully,
James Dooley”

That whilst full discussion and expression of opinion upon the proposals is quite in order, branches and unions are requested to refrain from pledging their delegates until such delegates have participated in a discussion on the matter at Conference.

The Executive is of the opinion that the pledging of delegates upon a matter to be discussed at the Annual Conference must be avoided, inasmuch as a general adoption of such practice would destroy the value of Conference, and, in fact, render the term itself a misnomer.

It was also decided to forward copies of the replies to the Interstate Executive and to the press.

Trusting that you will have this very important matter placed before the next meeting of your members for their earnest consideration.

Yours faithfully,
W Carey,
General Secretary.

The circular of the Parliamentary leaders was seized upon as proving that they were out after the scalp of the Central Executive, and the first men to deny this absolutely and emphatically were the leaders themselves.

Legislative Council

In August, 1922, a charge against Mr Dooley regarding the appointment of JB Suttor to the Legislative Council was made by Mr M Hynes, who had been Secretary of the Mount Victoria League, and was referred to the Disputes Committee for inquiry and report. Owing to the Federal elections the Disputes Committee withheld its report until the campaign was over, and on February 19 it presented it to the Executive for consideration. After dealing with the report exhaustively at three meetings it was adopted by 20 votes to 7 votes.

Finding of the Disputes Committee of the ALP in the Matter of the Appointment of Mr JB Suttor to the Legislative Council

Your Committee reports that the finding in the above matter has been available for some time, and could have been presented earlier, but on account of loyalty to the ALP, and to prevent it being used against Labor men in the recent Federal elections, and also being used as a lever for the
purpose of disrupting the Party, the Committee decided to hold it over until after the Federal elections.

The Committee held a most exhaustive inquiry, extending over 20 sittings, and gave every person interested every facility to prove or disprove the allegations. Many witnesses were examined, amongst who were Messrs Dooley, Hutch, McKell, MsLA, Mr Suttor, MLC, Messrs Hynes, the President, and other officers of the Mount Victoria League, Messrs Carey and Gibbs of the Head Office, and others.

The available books, records, and ticket butts of Mount Victoria ALP Branch were produced and examined.

The list of certified members from the Secretary of Mount Victoria Branch were scrutinised.

The books in the Head Office in connection with Mount Victoria Branch and the cheque book of moneys paid for books of tickets and the record of all members sent out were examined.

Mr Suttor failed to produce any ticket showing that he was a member of Mount Victoria or any other branch of the ALP during the period of three years, or any part of it, prior to his appointment to the Legislative Council.

The book produced from Mount Victoria Branch does not bear any signature of Mr Suttor having signed the roll book at any time.

No evidence was given that Mr Suttor had ever been proposed or accepted, as a member of the ALP.

Mr Suttor stated that about eight years ago he joined the Mount Victoria Branch, but ceased his membership for some years, and then rejoined in a period that would give him continuity, making him eligible for appointment to the Upper House, but Mr Suttor’s name does not appear on any list furnished to the General Secretary during any period as being a member of the ALP.

Mr Suttor admits having met Mr Hynes in Sydney after he was appointed to the Upper House, and on two occasions states he paid Hynes money, but gave it to him out of charity, and not for services rendered by faking tickets to make it appear that he was eligible for appointment as MLC.

Mr Suttor states his knowledge of Hynes was only limited, but he searched for him for some time round Woolloomooloo when he heard that Hynes wanted money, and gave him a certain sum; at the same time he knew of other deserving cases, but his charity was not extended to them.

For years past Mr Suttor has been a resident of Sydney and suburbs, and not a bona fide resident of Mount Victoria, which place he only visited at week ends, such visits coinciding with the visits of Mr Dooley.

The Committee gave Mr Suttor some months to search for and produce any ALP ticket issued to him, but he failed to do so. No ticket butt other than the a faked ones referred to by Hynes are in existence.
regarding Mr Suttor, and no evidence, apart from Mr Dooley’s statement “that Suttor gave him valuable assistance during election periods”, and that of Mr Mutch, who stated that Mr Suttor drove him to several meetings in his car in the Botany electorate, and of the President of the Mount Victoria ALP, who stated that Mr Suttor had given a few shillings in payment for social tickets, was elicited showing that Mr Suttor had helped in any way Labor’s cause.

Mr McKell, whom Mr Dooley stated had been assisted by Suttor, denied having ever received assistance in any form from Suttor.

The abovementioned items were regarded as personal matters with an underlying motive.

Mr Dooley, after several requests to attend a meeting of the Committee, eventually did attend, and made a written statement denying the statement made by Hynes, and produced a statement from the Inspector-General of Police that Hynes had a bad record.

Hynes had previously stated that any trouble he had been in was prior to his meeting with Mr Dooley, who had a full knowledge of such lapses, had then enough confidence in him to appoint him as a paid organiser and chief canvasser in Mt Victoria.

Hynes admits having faked the ticket butts, and states that Suttor was never a member of the Mt Victoria Branch during his period of secretaryship. The Committee must endorse that statement after having examined all documentary evidence in the case, and the list of members of Mt Victoria ALP made out by Hynes as secretary in his own handwriting, sent to the Head Office prior to Suttor’s appointment.

Hynes’s character is undoubtedly besmirched, but all this was within the knowledge of Messrs Dooley, Suttor and Payne before they engaged him for the purpose he asserts they did. But in fairness to Hynes it must be stated that he has a clean record, so far as we know, since he became associated with the Labor Movement.

The Committee unanimously agree that Mr Suttor was not eligible for appointment to the Legislative Council under the auspices of the ALP, that he had not the necessary qualifications in accordance with the Rules, the evidence submitted did not support the case that he at any time was imbued with Labor principles or ever did anything in Labor’s cause to warrant his appointment as MLC, and that by his appointment injustice has been done to the rank and file.

The Committee regrets the part played in this case by one honored by the Movement and placed in the position of a leader, and are of the opinion that Mr Dooley, in spite of his protests to the contrary, was well aware of the fact that Mr Suttor was not eligible under the Rules of the ALP to be nominated to the Legislative Council, and that he solicited votes in support of him, not because Mr Suttor was a Labor man, but out of personal motives to secure his own political ends and to compensate
Mr Suttor at the expense of the ALP for any personal assistance he may have given him.

Mr Dooley attempted in his explanation to justify any action taken by him by the fact of the 1920 Executive having endorsed and forwarded amongst others Mr Suttor’s application. That can be discounted by the fact of some hundreds of applications having been dealt with en bloc and certified to by League secretaries with the understanding that the final review and scrutiny would take place at Parliament House, when the Labor Party had them under consideration, and each applicant would be certified to by the members of the district. That procedure was apparently adopted, and Mr Dooley triumphantly piloted Mr Suttor into the Legislative Council. Though it is unpleasant to have to state, we are forced to concur in the belief that Mr Dooley was well aware of all the circumstances surrounding this corrupt appointment, and placed himself above the Movement in advocating such appointment.

Realising that the great Labor Movement relies upon the Central Executive to keep the political Movement clean, correct all abuses and corruption, and to deal out even-handed justice to all, we make the following recommendation.

We recommend that League secretaries be notified that Rule 10 must be strictly adhered to, and that a compiled list of league membership be kept in the ALP office. No person shall be endorsed whose name does not appear in continuity upon certified lists in ALP office, and every evidence of bona-fides thoroughly investigated.

(Signed) G Rowland
Chairman

Owing to a fresh outbreak of disintegrating statements appearing in the daily press on January 12 last, the Executive adopted the following resolution, which was conveyed to each member of the State Parliamentary Party:

“That the Executive hereby directs that any member of the Movement who hereafter promotes dissention within the ranks of the ALP by engaging in public recriminations with other members of the Movement or other practices of a reprehensible or disintegrating character shall be visited by the extreme penalty of expulsion, but all members shall have the right to bring all differences to the Executive for adjustment.”

Expulsion of Mr J Dooley

On Sunday and Monday, February 25 and 26, articles appearing over the signatures of Mr Dooley in the columns of the daily press were considered by the Executive at the meeting held on March 1, 1923. After consideration of the whole of the circumstances it was agreed, and a resolution was adopted by a large majority as follows: “That Mr Dooley’s defiance of Conference resolutions and Executive decisions automatically
places him outside the Labor Movement and this Executive therefore determines to immediately call for applications for the position of leadership of the State Party”.

The latter portion of the resolution makes a unique step in the procedure of the Movement, and the justification and authority for the Executive’s action is based upon the following ruling of the President, which was given at the last Conference, and having been adopted is now incorporated in the Constitution as Rule 33, which reads as follows:

“The Executive between Conferences has plenary powers to deal with all matters of Policy, Platform and Rules, and their decisions must be observed by all members of the Movement. But any member of the ALP shall have the right of appeal to the Conference next following from any Executive edict.”

Although the Executive action was the outcome of the crisis reached with Mr Dooley after the publication of the facts of the Suttor case, it is necessary that ALP members should be advised that this incident, discreditable enough in itself, was only one of the contributing causes to Mr Dooley’s forfeiture of the confidence of the Executive.

The Executive, while taking a serious view of the circumstances surrounding the Suttor appointment, and Mr Dooley’s knowledge of that gentleman’s lack of continuity of membership, had determined to leave the whole matter in the hands of Conference, but Mr Dooley’s attack on the members of the Executive brought him within the scope of the resolution supported by Mr Dooley himself at the Executive meeting at which it was adopted.

**In Conclusion**

The General Secretary desires to thank the President and Executive members for their unfailing courtesy and unfailing attention given to the many problems that have been placed before them from time to time. The sincere regard of members for the best interests of the Movement has resulted in a harmony of discussion which has greatly facilitated the consideration of the numberless matters submitted during the year for the Executive’s decision.

W Carey,
General Secretary

**Parliamentary Labor Party’s Report**

The 1922 election placed our Party in Opposition. The election itself was the result of extraordinary circumstances. At a time when much of the legislation we had promised the people had been advanced various stages, or had been drafted ready for presentation to the House, the Speaker resigned. Without a member outside our own ranks occupying
the chair we had no majority. Our Government resigned. The Nationalists were then in the same predicament and could not carry on. The Labor Party was again placed in control of the Treasury Benches and went to the electors as a Government.

Our defeat was not as great as it appeared. There were some seats in which a couple of hundred more votes to Labor would have returned the seat for Labor, and a sufficient gain should easily be obtained to place us in power next election. The Labor Government stood resolutely against a reduction in wages. The National Party celebrated its victory at the polls by acquiescing in the wholesale reduction of wages. They abolished the 44-hours, maintaining that its existence made for unemployment. They substituted 48-hours and immediately swelled the unemployed ranks by dispensing with the services of hundreds of men. So it is really the return to the 48-hours which has caused such widespread unemployment in this State today, and the party that said that once the 44-hours were abolished unemployment would practically cease has really made the position very much worse.

The Party fought strenuously against the amendment of the Industrial Arbitration Act, and vigorously contested any measure calculated to injure the people.

When the Public Works Committee was to be formed the Party selected Mr Frank Burke as its nominee, and he was duly elected by the Assembly, topping the poll.

The Government’s attitude in regard to the workers’ interests is being closely watched, and every effort will be made to thwart their attempts to destroy the effect of Labor legislation.

During the year a well-known figure and an old identity in the Labor Movement, in the person of Mr Jabez Wright, passed away. His place in the Assembly was taken by Mr E Horsington.

Robt. E O’Halloran
Secretary

Municipal Labor Party’s Annual Report

Town Hall, Sydney.
March 10, 1923

The General Secretary, Australian Labor Party,
Macdonell House, Sydney.

Dear Sir,

I beg to submit for the information of the Executive a brief review of the operations of the Labor Party in the City Council during the year 1922.
As you are aware, there were only nine survivors from the disastrous general Municipal elections of 1921, the Civic Reform Party being represented by 17 members.

Immediately upon his accession to office the Lord Mayor (Alderman WP McElhone) adopted a most autocratic attitude. With the battle cry of “Spoils to the victors”, he, without consideration for justice, embarked on a biased and vindictive campaign with the objective of robbing the employees of privileges held by them as a condition of service.

The block boys were amongst the first to feel the force of this vicious campaign against the workers. Employees known to be Labor sympathisers were gradually and systematically singled out for dismissal, while the preference to unionists condition of employment, which had operated in the City Council for such a considerable period, was cancelled. The Lord Mayor even went to the extent of denying the working man the right to rise from the ranks to the highest position in the service, which was striking at the very root of democracy. Is it any wonder that within a short period of the entry of the Civic Reform Party to the control of the city the employees were in a state of uneasiness, which seriously affected the efficiency of the service?

He also introduced conservative methods of administration, which if allowed to pass unchallenged would, while being against the best interests of the ratepayers as a whole, have also detrimentally reacted on the workers.

The concessions were attacked by Alderman Courtenay, Alderman Nicholls, his colleague, making a persistent and determined effort to substitute day labor by contract in regard to the cleansing of the city. By judicious handling both these efforts were frustrated.

The next important move by the Civic Reform Party was the adoption of a scheme to purchase additional supplies of electricity from the Railway Commissioners, thereby making the City Council dependent upon the Commissioners for an adequate supply of electricity to meet the demands of consumers. The General Manager strongly advocated the scheme, while the Labor Party opposed its adoption. Notwithstanding our efforts the recommendation was carried, and whilst recognising the ability of the General Manager we are still of the opinion that such an arrangement, if carried out for any length of time, will prove fatal to this valuable undertaking. It is strongly believed by the members of the Labor Party that the Council can generate electricity cheaper than the Commissioners, our plant being more modern and economical, and with the necessary extensions carried out the cost of production would be appreciably reduced. Under these circumstances we ask: “Why go to the Commissioners, who have repeatedly failed to keep faith with the public?” For this reason alone we hold we were justified in opposing any scheme having for its object the binding of the City Council by a contract
for the supply of current from such an unreliable public department as the Railway Department.

As set out in the report of last year’s operations it was stated that with the modern plant installed the Council would be in a position to reduce the prices of light and power for 1923. Although the conditions have been the same and the expenses just as heavy the profits now showing point to a big reduction in the direction indicated, and under such circumstances we have nothing to gain by linking up with the Commissioners.

An investigation has been held into the Electricity Undertaking. The ex-Lord Mayor appointed a firm of accountants (Messrs Smith and Johnson) to carry out this work. They were given a free hand, without the imposition of any restriction as to the amount required to carry out a thorough investigation into the operations of every branch of the undertaking. Two or three members of the staff of this firm were detailed for the work, and at the end of approximately three months the firm submitted a report on its investigations, together with an account for 1,000 guineas. Although the report may be valuable – and according to the price paid for it there does not appear to be any doubt in this direction – I have yet to learn what advantage a firm of accountants can be as advisers to any undertaking, they not having the necessary technical experience.

On going through the report I failed to discern one recommendation that could be classed as original, the General Manager in his comments going so far as to term some of the recommendations as “rot and utter nonsense”.

Investigations on similar lines have been made into the City Surveyor’s and City Architect’s Departments, but the reports are not yet available. However, nothing of a sensational character can be expected from them unless it is in the nature of a caustic criticism of the capabilities of some of the persons appointed to investigate.

Another vindictive move against the workers was the alteration in the system of pay from weekly to fortnightly, this hardship being inflicted upon employees under the guise of economy. The Lord Mayor endeavored to create a sensation by the publicity given to the disclosures which were to be awaited in regard to the paint contracts. In the end he seems to have had his desires gratified when the Foreman Painter was forced out of the service.

He also promised a revelation in regard to the woodblocks, but his search must have been disappointing, as we are still waiting to hear the result of the investigations of this Heaven-sent administrator.

Though faced with overwhelming odium in the Council, the Labor Aldermen, in the exercise of tact and commonsense, battled along against this reign of conservatism and had the satisfaction of finding that
towards the close of the year the Lord Mayor had become so autocratic as to cause a feeling of uneasiness within the ranks of his party.

Quick to take advantage of this we lost no opportunity of accentuating the breach, without offending against the cardinal principles of the Movement.

Gradually the position became more strained, and there was ultimately a cleavage in the ranks of the Civic Reform Party over the anxiety of the Lord Mayor to dispense with the services of the City Surveyor, four members of the party declining to endorse the attitude of the Lord Mayor on this subject, and further refusing to vote for his re-election as a fit representative to carry out their platform for the year 1923 in a fair and reasonable manner.

Bitter recriminations appeared in the press upon the subject, and by throwing our weight at the opportune time we were successful in having elected as Lord Mayor Alderman David Gilpin, from whom we could expect much more sympathetic treatment than his predecessor.

This move on our part naturally brought forth howls of condemnation from the capitalistic press, but time, we think, will prove that apart from the strategical success the change was in the best interest of the City.

Yours faithfully,
JV Holdsworth,
Hon Secretary, Municipal Labor Party

Report of Federal Parliamentary Labor Party

The Parliament of the Commonwealth
Melbourne, 25th January, 1923.
Mr W Carey,
General Secretary, ALP,
Macdonell House, Sydney.

Dear Comrade,

I hereby furnish for the information of your Executive a brief review of the activities of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party for the year 1922.

During the year we suffered another severe blow by the death of our trusted and esteemed Leader, the Honorable Frank Tudor. His sterling, personal qualities and his intimate knowledge of Parliamentary procedure, together with his long experience in the Labor Movement, rendered him invaluable to the Party. His loss is a great one, not only to the Movement but to the public life of Australia. Mr Matthew Charlton was elected leader in the place of the late Mr Tudor, and has fully justified the choice of the Party.
During the last session of Parliament, our members, though numbering only twenty-two in a House of seventy-five members, were constantly on the alert to protect the people’s interests, and in many instances by contesting Government proposals were responsible for their modification and improvement.

Our Party censured the Government for permitting the dumping of foreign goods into Australia while thousands of Australian workers were idle. We also fought strenuously against the immigration schemes that were aggravating the unemployed problem. The Government was saved on these, as on all other questions, by the votes of the Country Party.

The motion of our Leader to have Old-Age and Invalid Pensions increased to £1 per week was defeated by the same combination of Nationalist and Country Party members.

The question of sugar occupied an important place in the activities of the Party, and a censure motion was moved by our Leader (Mr Charlton). The Party endeavored to reduce the price of sugar to 4½d per lb, but were unsuccessful in their efforts. The Government very reluctantly reduced the price from 6d to 5d. This reduction would not have taken place had it not been for the strenuous fight put up by the Labor Party. We were also responsible for the investigations by a Committee of the whole of the sugar trading scheme. The report fully justified the attitude we took up.

The Party also protested very strenuously when it was learned that the Government intended to dispose of the Commonwealth Woollen Mills, but owing to the great influence of the woollen manufacturers and importers on the Government, tenders were called for the purchase of the mills.

Had it not been for the vigilance of the Opposition the impudent attempt by the Amalgamated Wireless Company to put their Chairman on the Wireless Board as a seventh or “independent” director would have succeeded. Labor frustrated that scheme.

We were also successful, after an effective debate, in compelling the Government to remove from the Defence Retirement Bill clauses that unjustly differentiated between the Civil and Military staffs in the matter of compensation.

Labor’s smashing criticism of Mr Bruce’s Budget exposed the financial juggling of the Government which plundered the Trust Fund and Notes Fund to make a fictitious surplus. We opposed the vast expenditure on assisted immigration, and the gift of nearly £3,000,000 by remission of taxation to large landowners, big warehousmen, banks, insurance companies, and individuals with large incomes. But the influence of “big business” was too strong. After a considerable struggle the Government agreed to increase the Income Tax exemption for children.
The questions of Repatriation, improved medical service for New Guinea, consideration for workers discharged from Government factories, and many other matters affecting the well-being of the people received our closest attention.

The Labor Party’s fearless exposure of scandals connected with War Service Homes, the Wireless Agreement, the Kidman-Mayoh ship-building contract, the sale of flour to South Africa, and the selling of wooden ships for less than the public tenders, rendered a service to the community by assisting to purify the public life of Australia.

The constant and telling attacks by the Labor Opposition seriously weakened the Government’s position. The Nationalist Government went to the country discredited and was defeated by the awakened electors.

The Near Eastern crisis and the approaching elections gave the Nationalist Government an opportunity to again exploit the war feeling, but although strenuous efforts were made to breathe life into a very dead corpse, it failed. This was mainly owing to the declaration of our Leader, Mr Charlton, that Australia was not going to be dragged at the heels of every filibustering Prime Minister, and that before any pledges were given on behalf of Australia the people should be consulted.

The elections took place on December 16th, and it is satisfactory to note that the people have at last begun to realise the danger of the Nationalist Government to their happiness and prosperity. The Party went to the country with 22 members in the House of Representatives and two in the Senate. The people showed an increasing confidence in the Labor Party, and we will now have 29 members in the House of Representatives and 12 in the Senate, which is a total of 41 out of 111 in both Houses. It will be seen that with a continuance of the present swing towards the Labor Party in the Federal arena it is almost certain that a Labor Government will take office after the next elections. While the Labor Party is the strongest individual party in the House of Representatives, there is a majority of 17 in the combined anti-Labor parties.

Notwithstanding this, the new Parliament promises to be very unstable, and there is a probability that owing to intriguing and internal dissension in the ranks of anti-Labor forces a crisis may be precipitated which may lead to an early dissolution. The Labor organisations should bear this in mind, and keep in readiness for another fight, and, in this instance, winning fight.

Yours fraternally,
(Signed) Arthur Blakeley,
Secretary Federal Parliament Labor Party
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1923

(The Worker, 6, 13, 20 June 1923)

Day 1, Saturday, 2 June 1923


The enthusiasm associated with the old-time Labor Conferences was an outstanding feature of the NSW Annual Conference, which opened at the Trades Hall, Sydney, last Saturday afternoon. In view of the importance of the business to be transacted by the Conference there was a record attendance – fully 300 delegates being present when business was called on by the President (Mr JM Power). Many members of the Federal and State Labor Parties were present. The seating accommodation in the big Social Hall was taxed to the utmost, and it was with difficulty that all delegates and official visitors could be seated.

The proceedings were of an animated character, and the announcement of each vote was punctuated by loud cheering. From the start it was plain that the Conference was lined up in two opposing camps – one supporting the Executive’s recent actions, and the other strongly opposed to them. That both sides had been strongly organised there was little doubt. But from the very outset the anti-Executive section scored, and continued to score, gaining in strength, until late on Monday night an important test vote showed that it had a majority of between 70 and 80 votes.

Federal Executive Officers Present

President Power declared the Conference open with a brief mention of the importance of the matters to be decided. He intimated that officers of the Federal Executive – Messrs R Sumner (President), J Hannan (Vice-President), and A Stewart (Secretary) – were present, and invited them to take part in the proceedings. This announcement was received with cheers. For the position of minute secretary, Senator J Grant defeated Mr C Last by a large majority, while Mr C Roberts was elected timekeeper. These were gains for the anti-Executive section.

On the question of admitting the press, Mr C Last moved that the press be admitted. He pointed out that the press would get reports of the Conference if they were not admitted, but that such reports would be ex parte statements, whereas, if they were admitted, there would be no excuse for misrepresentation. If the daily newspapers did not give a fair
report of the proceedings, Conference would know how to deal with them. The motion was carried. It was also decided to admit the public to the back of the hall, provided there was room after the alternate delegates had been accommodated.

When it came to electing the credentials committee it was suggested that the committee appointed prior to the Conference, consisting of Messrs A Stewart, G Rowlands and J Tyrrell, should continue to act throughout the Conference. Conference endorsed this suggestion. A spirited contest took place for the election of the agenda committee, and the following were elected: Messrs J Howie, A Blakeley, EC Magrath, J Graves and J O’Brien. This was another win for the anti-Executive section, which was represented by Messrs Blakeley, Magrath and O’Brien.

**A Letter from Mr Hynes**

President Power read several items of correspondence. One letter was from the Paddington League asking that Alderman Jones (Paddington) be heard by Conference with a view to his readmission to the Movement. It was pointed out that he was in the same position as Aldermen Purcell and Falvey, who appealed to the last Conference and were readmitted to the Movement. Conference decided to hear Alderman Jones at a later date. Another letter was from Mr Hynes (a prominent figure in the Dooley-Sutter business), who protested against his expulsion from the Movement, and asked to be allowed to address delegates. It was decided that he be heard at a date to be fixed.

**Move to Exclude Parliamentarians**

The first real business of the Conference was a matter regarding the admission of members of Parliament. At a meeting of the State Executive last Thursday, a motion was carried that they be not admitted. Following on this, the Federal Secretary (Mr A Stewart), on behalf of the joint committee of the State and Federal Executives, forwarded the following letter to the State Executive:

> “I am directed to inform you that the special committee appointed under the terms of the agreement between the Federal and State Executives holds that to prevent the admission of members of Parliament who are not delegates to Conference is a distinct breach of the understanding arrived at between the two bodies, as contained in clause 1 of the Agreement.

> “It decides, therefore, that in accordance with the customs previously established, members of Parliament are to be admitted, but they must be accommodated in a portion of the hall set apart from the delegates. It is recommended that they shall not be permitted to take part in the debates before Conference unless they are directly affected individually or personally.”
Reasons for State Executive’s Action

Mr Denford (Ironworkers) opened the debate on the matter by moving that the action of the State Executive be endorsed. He did not consider that members of Parliament, who were not delegates, had any right to take part in the proceedings. Mr Howie (Coopers’ Union), who seconded the motion, said he hoped that the rank and file of the Movement would have enough intelligence to conduct their own business without allowing the politicians to butt in. If the Conference was an industrial one members would not be allowed to speak, and he did not see why they should have special privileges at this Conference.

Mr G Rowlands (Executive) said he had moved the resolution at the meeting of the State Executive to exclude the Parliamentarians. He wanted delegates to get fair treatment instead of having the time of Conference wasted by the airing of grievances by the politicians. Mr Bell (Albury) suggested that the Parliamentarians should be allowed to attend the present Conference, but should be debarred in the future. If they were excluded from the present Conference delegates might think there was some ulterior motive. Mr W Dean (Municipal Employees) favoured hearing the Parliamentarians. They had a case to put forward, as well as the State Executive, and Conference would have to judge which side was right.

After several other delegates had expressed their views a vote was taken. The motion was narrowly defeated – by 129 to 127. A division was demanded, and this showed that the motion was defeated by 130 to 121. This was a win for the anti-Executive section, and brought forth loud cheering.

Mr Dooley’s Appeal to Conference

President Power read a letter from Mr J Dooley, protesting against his expulsion from the Movement, and requesting that he be allowed to address the Conference. On the motion of Mrs Fowler (Botany) it was decided to hear Mr Dooley. There was a lengthy debate as to when Mr Dooley should address delegates. Mr Stapleton (Paddington) moved that he had heard on Monday night. Mr Denford moved an amendment that the Executive’s report be dealt with before Mr Dooley was invited to address delegates. He thought this was the proper course to take, because if the Executive’s action was not endorsed Mr Dooley would then automatically go back into the Movement. If, on the other hand, the Executive’s action was upheld, Conference could then decide what to do with Mr Dooley. Mr H Connell, MLA, opposed the amendment, which he said was equivalent to trying Mr Dooley in his absence. He thought that Mr Dooley should be heard first.
Mr D Stewart (Western Suburbs) moved as a further amendment. “That Mr Dooley be invited to be present when the Executive’s report was being considered, and to be allowed to speak”. Mr Garden (Sailmakers) supported the view taken by Mr Stewart. Mr Willis (Coal Miners) also thought that Mr Dooley should be present when the Executive’s report was being dealt with. He suggested that the matter be taken at 2 pm on Monday. Mr Lang, MLA, appealed to delegates to give Mr Dooley a fair trial. Mr Stewart’s further amendment was carried by 149 votes to 112. The result was loudly cheered by the anti-Executive section, and this brought forth hoots from those opposed to Mr Dooley. A division was then claimed, and the final result was 142 in favour of Mr Stewart’s amendment and 132 against.

**Federal Labor Leader Welcomed**

At this stage the President introduced the Federal Labor Leader (Mr Charlton), who was received with loud cheers. In the course of a few words, Mr Charlton expressed his pleasure at being present at the largest Annual Conference he had ever attended. He appealed to delegates to settle their factional disputes and line up to meet their opponents in strength. If they did this Labor would soon regain its former strength. The tide had turned, and what had been done in Queensland on May 12 would be repeated in the near future in the Commonwealth and in other States. Then Labor would come into its own.

**All Parties to Dispute to be Invited**

Mr Baddeley, MLA, (Coalminers), reopened the debate on the question of Mr Dooley’s attendance at Conference. He moved that the officials deputed to put the case for the Executive and Mr Dooley to be present at 2 pm on Monday, and that the Executive’s report be taken seriatim. He wanted to see a fair and open go for everyone. Mr JM Kelly (AWU) said that if Mr Dooley was to be allowed to attend, so should Messrs Suttor, Richards, Hynes, and others who were concerned in the Dooley-Executive business. He was not prepared to remain in the room and hear Mr Dooley if Hynes was not also invited to be present. Considerable interruption followed. Mrs Melville (Executive) suggested that the minority report from the Executive should be considered at the same time.

Mrs Fowler (Botany) drew attention to the fact that Mr Dooley was expelled, not because of the Suttor business, but because of what he stated in the daily press against Executive members. Hynes had nothing to do with that matter.
Mr Willis claimed that Mr Kelly was out of order on the ground that earlier in the proceedings Conference had decided to hear Hynes at a later date.

Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers) said that for a working-class crowd to constitute themselves a jury to try a fellow-worker passed his comprehension. What they wanted was a cleaning up of the Movement, and they wanted it done in a complete manner. He supported the amendment to admit Hynes and Suttor.

Finally Mr Baddeley accepted the amendments of Mr Kelly and Mrs Melville, and the motion was carried.

**Order of Business**

Shortly before the end of the evening session on Saturday Mr Magrath presented a report from the agenda committee suggesting that the business before the Conference should be taken in the following order:

1. The standing orders should be established, and arrangements made for the election of officers for the coming year.
2. Election of returning-officer.
3. Appointment of scrutineers.
4. President’s address.
5. The report of the Federal officers (Messrs R Sumner, president; F Hannan, vice-president; and Arch Stewart, (secretary).

Mr Howie, on behalf of himself and Mr Graves, submitted a minority report recommending that Conference should take the report of the Federal officers upon intervention at the same time as the Dooley matter, and that the State Executive’s report should be dealt with at the same time. After a short discussion, the majority report submitted by Mr Magrath was adopted by a large majority. Conference then adjourned till Monday.

**Day 2, Monday, 4 June 1923**

**Alterations to Standing Orders**

The greater part of the morning session on Monday was taken up with a discussion regarding the Standing Orders. Mr J McGarry (Furniture Trades) moved that clause 10 be altered to read that nominations for officers and Executive Committee be received until 9 pm on Monday, June 4, ballot papers to be issued at 1 pm on Wednesday, and the ballot to close at 9 the same night. Mr Stewart (Western Suburbs) moved an amendment that Clause 10 be deleted for the time being, and come up for
discussion at a later stage. A second amendment was moved by Mr Cleary to provide for day sittings, while a third amendment by Mr Denford (Ironworkers) was that the clauses of the standing orders be taken and discussed individually. All the amendments were defeated, and the motion by Mr McGarry was carried.

A delegate drew attention to the great waste of time in taking divisions, and moved that no division be taken in those cases where the majority on a show of hands was more than 10 votes. The motion was defeated.

On the question of the election of a returning officer, Mr Lang, MLA, nominated Mr W Gibbs (Assistant-Secretary). Mr J Kelly seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations and Mr Gibbs was declared elected. For scrutineers, Messrs H Walker, J Higgins, EC Riley, and Ewen were elected.

**The Ballot Box**

Mrs Dwyer (Women Workers) asked that the ballot box used at the election of the last Executive be used for the present election, also that it should be placed in the hands of the returning officer and scrutineers for examination prior to being used. This would show that there was nothing wrong with it. She referred to the allegations about ballot boxes with sliding panels, and said she was one of a committee which investigated the allegations. They found two with sliding panels, and she wanted to see the person responsible for those ballot boxes dealt with. There was not a score of ballot boxes with sliding panels as had been alleged by some persons, including Mr Lang, to the Federal Executive. She only knew of two, and if Mr Lang knew of any more it was his duty to state where they were.

Mr AC Willis took a point of order that as the matter had to be gone into thoroughly at a later stage discussion about the ballot boxes with sliding panels should not be discussed now. The President sustained the point of order.

Mr Hutchinson, supporting Mrs Dwyer, alleged that Mr George Cann had gone to leagues and unions stating that the Executive ballot box was “crook.” (Uproar) Mr Cann replied, “That is a deliberate lie!” and added that he was referring to the boxes with the sliding panels, not to the Executive ballot box. Mr Hutchinson said he was prepared to stand by any statements he was making to the Conference, and to bring witnesses to prove that what he was saying was correct. (More uproar) He wanted the General Secretary (Mr Carey) to verify that the ballot box now at the office was the one used for taking last year’s Executive ballot. That ballot box had been placed before the Federal Executive, and they were satisfied that it was all right, and that there was nothing crook about it.
When Executive Box was Examined

Mr Mills moved, as an amendment, that it be left to the discretion of the returning-officer and scrutineers to select the ballot box to be used. He did not know whether the ballot box used last year was “crook” or not. He did not know that it was nine months afterwards that it was examined, not immediately after the election of the Executive, as was being inferred. There was not the slightest doubt that “crook” ballot boxes were in existence. As the matter of a full investigation of the ballot boxes was to come on later he hoped the motion would not be carried.

Mr J Lang seconded the amendment. The ballot box used at last Conference would be wanted during the investigation into the question of ballot boxes; therefore it should not be used for the present ballot. He wanted last year’s ballot box to be examined by delegates. The returning-officer and scrutineers could select any ballot box they desired.

Mr Dooley’s Expulsion

At the opening of the afternoon session, Mr Blakeley, MHR (AWU), referred to the business before Conference, and moved that the majority report of the Executive should be taken first, and then the minority report. After that Mr Hynes should make his accusations, and Mr Dooley should be heard in defence. He didn’t want to see Hynes coming to the Conference and making charges after Mr Dooley had stated his case. Hynes should be heard first.

Mr Blakeley’s motion was the signal for disorder from the anti-Dooley section. Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants) accused Mr Blakeley of trying to cloud the issue. Mr McLelland opposed the motion. Mr Willis contended that the procedure had already been decided. Finally, Mr Blakeley’s motion was carried by a large majority.

Accusations against Miners’ Delegates

Uproar took place when one of the delegates from the Miners’ Federation stated that Mr Kelly (AWU) had made statements reflecting on the miners’ delegates, and demanded that they be withdrawn. Mr Willis (Coalminers) added that Mr Kelly had deliberately accused some of his fellow-delegates of being in the pay of their leaders. That was a deliberate untruth. Another delegate demanded that if Mr Kelly could not prove his allegations he should be expelled from the Conference. Mr Kelly replied that he had been insulted by them, but he was prepared to withdraw the allegation if his information was not correct.

Mr Willis: What is your information? Out with it!
Another delegate demanded that Mr Kelly be made to withdraw without qualification. Amidst disorder, Mr Kelly withdrew his statements unconditionally.

**Mr Dooley at Conference**

At this stage Mr Dooley entered the Conference, and was given a rousing reception. This was followed by hooting from some of the delegates and from the audience at the back of the hall, but counter-cheering followed. Mr Dooley was given a seat on the platform. The President appealed for order, warning the audience at the back of the hall that no interruption would be tolerated. Mr Lang, MLA, asked if Mr Hynes was present, and if not that the business be delayed a few minutes till he could be located. Mr Carey (General Secretary) said he had tried to find Hynes but could not, but his address was known. On the suggestion of Mr Lang it was decided to send a motor car to Hynes’s house and bring him to Conference.

Mr McLelland then opened the discussion on the Executive’s report. This was the first opportunity they had of presenting a case to country delegates, and he hoped they would not allow their judgment to be warped by prejudice or suspicion. He asked for a square deal for the Executive, and nothing more.

**Trying to Locate Hynes**

At this stage Mr Denford reported that he had gone to Hynes’ house, but did not find him, as he had gone to the races. (Laughter) Mr Denford added that he had been told that they could see Hynes when he returned. The President instructed Mr Denford to go to Hynes’ house again at the tea adjournment and bring him to Conference for the night session.

**Unconstitutional Leagues**

After Mr McLelland had formally moved the adoption of the first clause of the Executive’s report dealing with new branches, Mrs Fowler (Botany) alleged that certain leagues at Newtown had been formed unconstitutionally. She referred to Newtown East and Camdenville. She said that Executive officers had no right to participate in the formation of those leagues. She moved that the matter of new branches in the metropolitan area be referred back to the incoming Executive and the remainder of the clause adopted.

A delegate from Newtown said that the new leagues had been formed by a few disgruntled persons who could not get their own way in the old leagues. A country delegate said that at the present time members of Parliament were not doing their duty in the matter of organisation. For
eight months in the year they did nothing. They should take a more active part in organising work.

Mr Charlton (Federal Labor Leader) said it was a big mistake to suppose that members of Parliament did nothing during recess; they were continually busy performing various duties for their constituents. Two-thirds of his electorate (Hunter) was organised, and delegates were present at Conference. He would remind them that he went into the Hunter electorate and won it for Labor, and had held it ever since.

Mr Frank Burke, MLA, supported Mrs Fowler. Newtown was honey-combed with leagues. He would like to see as many leagues as impossible, providing they were legitimate ones. The leagues under discussion crept up prior to the Federal election, when there was an attempt to have a particular man selected. In his opinion the Executive tried to smash the existing Newtown leagues.

Mr McLelland denied this allegation. The amendment as moved by Mrs Fowler was carried.

Parliamentary Party v Caucus

Mr McLelland then moved the adoption of the clause in the Executive’s report under the heading of “Disintegrating Influences”. He said that immediately subsequent to the close of last Conference allegations of corrupt practices in connection with the Movement were circulated in the columns of the press, and anonymously, which resulted in the Parliamentary Party and the Executive holding joint meetings for the purpose of allowing any member who desired to make definite charges and substantiate them. An invitation was extended to place all such charges, but the Parliamentary Caucus did not bring its charges to the Executive but had adopted measures which brought the matter into the columns of the daily press.

As regards the allegations of “crook” ballot boxes, they were made in 1920, not during the lifetime of the 1922 Executive. Further, the Executive had not conducted a selection ballot during the year, yet it was branded as corrupt because of the existence of the “crook” ballot boxes. The Executive resented the charges made in Caucus, and because the Parliamentary Party did not come along with its charges the Executive refused to institute a heresy hunt. There must be definite charges before any cleaning up could be done. Finally a committee was appointed to draft the following reply:

“TO MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE: Ladies and Gentlemen, During August and September last a press campaign came into evidence, and had every appearance of being intended to further disrupt the Labor Movement.

“Almost daily reports appeared in regard to meetings of the Parliamentary Party, setting out statements alleged to have been made by members of
Parliament, which seriously reflected upon the Executive and upon the Movement generally.

“The Executive was anxious to avoid further conflict, which could only have had a harmful effect upon the cause of Labor, and, therefore, refrained from replying or making any statement through the press. It was confidently felt that the reports would be promptly repudiated by the Party as untrue.

“After waiting a considerable time, however, no such repudiation or explanation was forthcoming from the Party, and the Executive was therefore compelled to believe that the Party was prepared to take the responsibility for such statements.

“Notwithstanding this failure by the MsP to do the fair and decent thing through the press, the Executive still refrained from public controversy, and invited the Parliamentary Party to meet it and repeat the statements, or make charges if they were prepared to do so.

“It is regrettable that a very poor response was made to this invitation, as at the first meeting only about one-third of the members attended, whilst at following meetings their attendances were practically nil.

“The members completely failed to submit any definite charge or make any suggestion worthy of note that would assist the Movement, and the Committee is forced to the conclusion that the whole incident is more the outcome of personal feeling within the Party than of a well-judged attempt to place the interest of the Movement first.

“The Committee also recommends that this statement, if adopted, be incorporated in the annual report to Conference.

“(Signed) Harry L Brown, JM Power, C Last, Members of Committee”

The “Crook” Ballot Boxes

Mr G Cann, MLA, referred to statements made by Mr Hutchison earlier in the day. He (Cann) saw the Executive ballot box nine months after it had been used for the taking of the Executive ballot, and at that time he could see nothing wrong with it. But on the night it was shown to him he was taken into the Secretary’s office and shown a ballot box with a sliding panel in it. He made no statement that the Executive ballot box was crook. What he said was that there were “crook” ballot boxes in existence. So long as there was one “crook” ballot box in existence there would be crooked work. He was told that a special committee was at work trying to find out who was responsible for the “crook” ballot boxes. The names of two members of the Movement were mentioned in connection with them. The ballot boxes with the sliding panels were similar to the Executive ballot box.

Mr Lang, MLA, moved an amendment, “That clause 2 of the report of the minority of the Executive be substituted for the clause under discussion”. This was ruled out of order, and he thereupon moved: “That
discussion of the clause be deferred, and that it be taken in conjunction with the minority report”.

**President Power’s Observations**

President Power, in defining the scope of the debate, said that any person who said that all was well with the Labor ballots did not know what he was talking about. Much of the matter that caused the coming together of members of the Executive and the Parliamentarians was not so much the statements by Caucus members, but the insinuations made in the press. It was a clear indication that there was something wrong with the Movement when private matters appeared in the press. He believed that Caucus should have appointed members to make statements in reply to those appearing in the press. Things had been stated in the press regarding Executive meetings which were the very reverse to the truth.

As regards the faked ballot boxes he knew nothing about them, or how or by whom they were made, or who gave the order. He wasn’t a member of the Executive at the time. But about 12 months ago he did discover that crook ballot boxes were in existence, and he would say they had been deliberately made “crook”. Neither of the two boxes had been used in conjunction with the last election of the Executive. The Executive had appointed a committee, which had made inquiries, and, as far as he knew, it was impossible to get the address of the person who constructed the boxes, and who alone could give the information required. He (Mr Power) was told that the man who made the boxes had stated that he had been instructed to make them “crook”. On the other hand he had seen a later statement by the man denying that he had made any “crooked” boxes. Regarding what took place at the last meeting of the Executive, the proposal to send the report on the boxes to the Conference was rejected, but such a decision could not prevent the Conference getting the report if it desired it. The document could be secured if necessary.

**Documents Demanded**

Mrs Dwyer said that Mr Rowlands, chairman of the investigating committee, had a report on the matter which could be furnished to Conference.

The President said this would be done at a later stage.

Mr Buckley, in a personal explanation, said he wished to clear his name regarding the “crook” ballot boxes. He could give an emphatic denial to any charges made against him. He demanded that the report be presented, and the matter fully investigated.

Mr Tom Arthur said it was true that he had been returning officer at the time. He, too, wanted to clear his name in the matter. He demanded that an officer be despatched to the Secretary’s office to bring
immediately to Conference the report, which should show his evidence before the committee and the minutes of the last Executive meeting.

This was agreed to. It was also decided to submit to Conference a signed statement by Mr Stapleton (Paddington). Mr Buckley also asked that the minute-book of Caucus be produced at Conference. Mr EC Riley, MHR, asked that the General Secretary’s letter of July 7, 1922, dealing with the “crook” ballot boxes be read to Conference.

**Secretary Carey’s Letter to Executive**

The President read the letter, which was as follows:

“On Wednesday last Mr Will Ennis, editor of the *Labor News*, challenged the ALP ballot boxes.

“Mr Ennis stated that the previous afternoon he had heard at Parliament House that the Clerical Association had discovered a sliding panel in a ballot box borrowed from us. He made inquiries next morning at the office of the Clerical Association, and Messrs P Coleman and Les Smith bore out the story. They said they had found a loose panel in a cedar or redwood box.

“As the ALP had no cedar or redwood box, I returned with the editor of the *Labor News* to the office of the clerks, and invited Messrs Coleman and Smith to find such a box amongst ours.

“They came back to Macdonell House with us, and indicated the box, through paper they had plastered over the loose board and the slot, part of their stamp being visible. They had made a mistake about the material, but not as to the sliding panel.

“We were reinforced by Messrs Power and Gibbs and discovered that, of the eight boxes on the premises, two were fraudulent. Quite likely the others would yield to a hammer tap, but were too tight to slide.

“There are five more boxes out on loan to affiliated unions or branches, and not returned.

“Each sliding panel has been camouflaged with nail heads, clearly providing that the thing was done with intent, and was not due to the maker scamping his job. Also, somebody knew how to work the oracle, for in one case, the unnailed board was shifted by a hammer, as marks upon it show. It was so tight that the tongue of the panel which fitted into it was torn away.

“Mr Coleman stated that his union borrowed the box in February, but they returned it without reporting the discovery – in effect because he was too ashamed of it. The man who actually found that the board moved was Mr Lynch, of the Clerical Association. About five are stated to have been present at the time.

“The order for the boxes was made prior to the selection ballots for 1920. The returning officer was Mr Tom Arthur and he was authorised to have the work done. The boxes were not delivered at this office until after those
ballots, the returning officer having accepted and distributed them among the various bodies that were engaged in the taking of the ballots.

“I objected to the extortionate price demanded, and I held back portion of the money; but Mr AW Buckley stated that the maker was a most deserving constituent of his, out of employment, and the Central Executive instructed me to pay the rest of the money. I made out a cheque for this to Mr Buckley personally, and the receipt is signed by John Cummings.

“Since it is over two years ago that the boxes were made, and as several organisations may have made discoveries similar to that of the Clerical Association, it is no wonder that stories of corruption have been floating around. In my opinion, therefore, we should be equally open in dealing with the suppression of this fraud, now that it had come to our official knowledge.

“Both the Movement itself and every official of the Movement have everything to lose by the adoption of the Star Chamber tactics which would put us under a cloud for ever, merely to shield those responsible, whoever they may be. (Signed) W Carey”

The President said that a committee was appointed by the Executive to deal with the matter. He did not know that any report came before the Executive until last week. He regretted that the matter was not referred to him immediately or he would have taken good care to deal with it.

Mr Coleman’s Observations

Mr Coleman, MHR, late Secretary of the Clerical Association, dealt with the discovery of the boxes, as outlined in Mr Carey’s letter to the Executive. He did not blame members of the Executive for the crookedness. If the Executive knew the boxes were “crook” they would hardly loan them out to unions to be discovered. The discovery by the Clerical Association was not reported at the time because it was thought that the box was defective and had been lent to the union by the Executive in error. He suggested that in future galvanised ballot boxes be constructed, and hoped that the person responsible for the “crook” boxes would be suitably dealt with.

President Power produced the statement signed by Mr Stapleton (Paddington) regarding a conversation between him and a Mr Cummings. The President added that the Executive had got in touch with Mr Cummings, but could not get him to attend any meetings. Last week members of the investigating committee went to Mr Cummings’s house, and secured a statement from him in which he denied the allegations made by Mr Stapleton. He had made boxes, but they were all honestly made.
Who Ordered the Boxes?

Mr Tom Arthur objected to his name being used in the matter. The minute book would show that he had no authority to give any orders for ballot boxes. It was true that he was returning officer at the time. He asked for the production of the minute book. Mr Carey said that Mr Arthur’s name was not mentioned in the matter. He did not know who ordered the boxes, and they were not delivered to the ALP office until after the ballots had been taken. He could not say who ordered the boxes. Mr Buckley, in answer to a question, said that Mr Cummings was a resident at No 10 Richard’s Avenue, Surry Hills, before he (Buckley) went to live there. He took over the house, and Cummings remained there for a couple of weeks till he got another house on the other side of the street.

Mr Arthur said he did not give the order for the ballot boxes nor take delivery of them.

A Quaint Suggestion

At the night session of the Conference Mr G Rowlands, chairman of the special committee which investigated the allegations regarding the ballot boxes, detailed the inquiries that had been made by the committee. The committee interviewed the man who was stated to have made the “crook” boxes, but he repudiated having made any “crook” boxes. He also denied the allegations made by Mr Stapleton. The Executive officials knew nothing of the crook boxes until the matter was brought to light by the Clerical Association. Boxes had been loaned out to unions, and who was to say that somebody had not sent back “crook” boxes in exchange for good ones supplied to them? (Laughter)

Mr Stapleton (Paddington) said he wasn’t making any charge against any member of the Movement. What he did do was to appear before the special committee and state what had been told him. He was prepared to stand by that statement.

Mr J Lang, MLA, said that the fact that “crook” ballot boxes existed was proof of corruption. The Executive had admitted the existence of the “crook” boxes. He read a statement signed by Mr Lazzarini, MLA, which set out that a man had declared that he and another man had made twelve “crook” ballot boxes, with sliding panels so constructed that a person’s hand could be inserted into the box. This man was prepared to appear before the Conference and affirm the statements made, also to identify the boxes he had made.
Executive Should be Placed on Trial

Mr Lang (continuing) said that the cause of the dissension throughout the State was the rottenness of the Executive – (uproar) – in aiding and abetting the corruption. The Executive were told about the “crook” ballot boxes last July, yet they deliberately endorsed one candidate for Cook and another for Reid. (Disorder) The Executive should be placed on trial and found guilty or innocent. The charge should not be who made the boxes, but who had allowed the fair name of Labor to be dragged in the mud. The Conference should appoint a committee to find out who were the guilty persons, and Conference should be given power to deal with them. He asked the Conference to reject that portion of the Executive’s report under discussion and adopt clause 2 of the minority report.

Mr G Rowlands challenged Mr Lang to name anything against him. This brought angry hoots from the delegates. At this stage it was announced that every effort had been made to get Mr Hynes to come to the Conference, but without success. Hynes had stated that he had no intention of coming to Conference. Mr Denford, who had tried to persuade Hynes to come to Conference, said that the inmates of the house made it very clear to him that Hynes would not put in an appearance at the Conference.

Was there a Motive?

Resuming the debate Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) said he did not blame the outgoing Executive for making the “crook” ballot boxes, but they did their best to hide the business instead of exposing it. When the matter was up before the Executive last week, he had asked that the matter be sent to Conference, but the Executive refused to do so. It withheld it for some unknown reason. Whether it was to hide and shield certain persons he did not know. He, too, wanted to see Conference adopt clause 2 of the minority report.

Mr G Sutherland said he was not a member of the Executive in the year the ballot boxes were made. He suggested that the person who was supposed to have made the boxes should be brought to the Conference and allowed to state just what was the truth about the matter. He wanted everybody connected with the matter brought before the Conference and the whole business cleared up.

Mr O’Dea said that material evidence had been withheld from the committee investigating the matter. He claimed that Mr Coleman did not come forward with his evidence as early as he should have done. The Executive did not want to cloak the matter up. They had intended bringing it before the Conference. He hoped that the Conference would get at the bottom of the matter.
**Bigger Issues at Stake**

Mr Baddeley, MLA, (Miners), said that last year, when he was elected, he heard all sorts of rumours about corruption, faked ballot boxes and so on. He set out to do his best to get investigations made. Allegations were hurled at him everywhere, but he considered it his duty to help clean up the Movement. Last August he brought the matter to Caucus, and moved a resolution which was conveyed to the Executive, which in turn asked him for definite statements. At that time he came to the conclusion that the Executive was trying to “put one over” on the Parliamentary Party. He told Caucus members that it was their duty to go to the rank and file and explain everything. It was not thought advisable to do that at that stage. About that time the joint circular was issued by Messrs Dooley, Charlton and Gardiner. The evidence now before Conference clearly showed that the Executive knew all about the faked ballot boxes last July. He was out to see the Movement cleaned up. There were bigger issues at stake, and it was time they commenced to do something for the working people.

Mr CC Lazzarini, MHR, said the statement referred to by Mr Lang came into his possession shortly before the intervention of the Federal Executive. He supplied delegates with additional details regarding the statements made to him by the man who said he had made the boxes. He wanted the Conference to appoint a special committee to thoroughly investigate the statements that had been made.

**Executive’s Responsibility**

Mrs Melville, a member of the minority section of the Executive, said that time and again members of the minority section pressed to have this matter cleaned up. They were told that the committee was sitting. The Executive made an attempt to throttle the matter last Thursday night. Mr Mills requested that the matter be referred to the Conference, but that suggestion was turned down. She blamed the Executive for not putting one of the “minority” members on the investigating committee. Despite the fact that certain persons were under a cloud, the Executive endorsed them for selection. She demanded that a committee be appointed to inquire into the matter. The Executive was not responsible for making the ballot boxes, but they were certainly responsible for shielding certain men. She said that it was useless trying to bring anything before the Executive, because when statements were made by members of the minority section they were assailed with cries of, “You belong to the Catts-ites!”

Mrs Bailey (Executive) said that the first they knew of the “crook” ballot box was when Mr Coleman reported it. They had tried to find the man who made them, but failed. In her opinion every trouble that
occurred was due to a politician or an aspiring politician. Whenever they made an attempt to clean up the Movement they found a politician in every dirty corner. Rather than be mixed up with any more disputes she would sooner be off the Executive.

Miss May Matthews said she knew that “crook” ballot boxes were in existence in 1920, and reported the matter to Mr Power, asking that action be taken.

The President said that Miss Matthews’s statement was true, but at that time he was not a member of the Executive.

*The Cook and Reid Ballots*

Mr Ely (minority Executive) said he came on the Executive when the “crook” ballots were being dealt with. The first Cook ballot had been declared null and void. Mr Riley topped the poll. Mr Rowlands was appointed by the Executive to conduct the second Cook ballot, and although Mr Riley was again at the top of the poll it was again declared null and void. He found that Mr Arthur had been endorsed by the Executive, notwithstanding that his name had been mentioned by Mr Carey in his report on the ballot boxes. It was only by the narrow margin of one vote of the Executive that Mr Riley finally got the selection. He added that Mr Rowlands also went out to the Reid electorate to advocate the claims of Mr Buckley.

Mr Rowlands said that was not a fact.

Mr Ely said it was true that Mrs Bailey did stand up for Mr Coleman in the Reid selection, because she saw the crooked work that was going on behind the scenes. She realised that there was a conspiracy against both Riley and Coleman. He (Ely) knew nothing of the letter regarding the “crook” ballot boxes till last week, although it was written by Mr Carey last July. He hoped the Conference would adopt the minority report.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that there was no doubt in his mind that the Labor Movement wanted cleaning up, but he would not condemn anybody on *ex parte* statements. He thought that the matter of the “crook” ballot boxes should be referred to a committee for thorough investigation before any action was taken. At a later date he proposed to expose some of the crookedness in connection with selection ballots.

*Faked Union Tickets*

Mr Shieles (Clerical Association) said that nothing so far had been said about the faking of union tickets. It was not so much a question of “crook” ballot boxes as of “crook” voting at selection ballots. In the Cook and Reid selections they could not verify some of the people who voted. Regarding the faked ballot boxes, if they were not delivered to the ALP
office, to what room in Macdonell House were they taken? He contended that it was useless appealing to the Executive on any matter when the cards were already stacked against the appellant.

Mr J Howie (Coopers’ Union) said that in every selection ballot the pence cards of the unions were hawked round the electorates. There were dozens of ways by which crook work could be done. Crook work was creeping in everywhere. He moved, as an amendment, that a committee of five be appointed to inquire into the whole matter, and report to Conference at a later date.

This amendment was seconded by Mr T Bartle, but was ruled out of order by the President.

**Executive Censured**

On a vote being taken, the amendment to reject certain portions of the Executive report and adopt in their place clause 2 of the minority report was carried by 187 to 110. The result was received with loud cheering, and marked a distinct defeat for the Executive.

The clause of the minority report referred to reads as follows:

> “2. The Dooley-Gardiner-Charlton Circular

> “On December 21, 1922, the Federal and State leaders, inspired, no doubt, by the allegations of corrupt ballots, issued a circular to branches and unions making suggestions whereby the Movement might be strengthened and cleansed. The circular was not referred to the Executive, but in view of the fact that members of the Executive are members of leagues and unions, the circular would come under their notice, leagues and unions being the only bodies competent to accept or reject the proposals contained therein.

> “We consider that the leaders acted within their rights, and had every reason to be dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs. The selection ballots taken in Cook, Werriwa and Reid were declared null and void, in consequence of corrupt practices, yet the majority of the Executive, although it had the evidence before it, took no action in the direction of punishing those responsible for the corrupt practices, neither were steps taken to punish those responsible for the introduction of fraudulent ballot boxes.”

Conference then adjourned till Tuesday night (June 5).

**Day 3, Tuesday, 5 June 1923**

**More Revelations**

The debate on the “crook” ballot boxes was resumed last night. Mr J Howie (Coopers’ Union) moved, “That a committee of five be appointed to examine existing evidence regarding the alleged ‘crook’ ballot boxes”.

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Mr T Arthur, who seconded the motion, said that as his name had been mentioned in connection with the matter, he intended to tell Conference what he knew about it. “After the Executive decided to have the ballot boxes constructed”, he said, “a few days afterwards I, during the lunch hour, went to the ALP rooms to see Mr Carey as to what was being done regarding the construction of these boxes. Messrs Catts, Bailey, Stuart-Robertson, and several others were present while I was waiting to see Mr Carey. A gentleman who was there said he was the person who was making the boxes, and that they would be delivered the following Friday afternoon. I had ordered the ballot papers from The Worker office, and had counted them, and placed them in a tin trunk, which I locked with a padlock, and that was placed in the back of the ALP rooms.

300 Ballot Papers Missing

“The following morning when I called at the office I discovered that the ballot papers had been disturbed. Out of 6000 or 7000, some 300 were missing. I then had fresh ballot papers printed a different colour, and numbered. I told President Lambert and Mr Carey (the Secretary) what I had done. We were the only three that knew.

“On the following Friday there were inside the ALP doors a number of ballot boxes, twelve or thirteen. The deputy returning officers had previously received instructions from me to report at Macdonell House before 8 o’clock on the Friday night, and I would hand them the whole of the material to take the ballot with. Owing to my discovery about the missing ballot papers I refused to give the material to them until the following morning at 9 o’clock.

Ballot Conducted

“The ballot boxes were indiscriminately chosen by the deputy returning officers, and I handed them their material. They took the boxes away between 9 and 10.15. Their instructions were to seal and sign the ballot boxes and return them to Macdonell House. The ballot boxes were returned as instructed, and the counting of the ballot continued until 3 am on Sunday. The ballot boxes were then locked up. Next day someone asked for their ballot box back. I refused to allow anything to be touched until the Executive endorsed the candidates. There was no protest of any kind from any candidate. The candidates selected were Messrs Jack Birt, Minahan, Buckley, Tom Smith and Mick Burke. Later I had a request from Mr Stuart-Robertson for the loan of a box. I lent him a box.
A Borrowed Box

“The ballot box which I lent Mr Stuart-Robertson subsequently was never returned by him to me. He borrowed it for someone in Balmain, and afterwards I heard it went to Glebe. Last night Mr Ely tried to drag my name into the mud. It is a significant fact that a ballot box should be discovered in the Clerks’ Union’s office, and returned eight months after its discovery. It is a significant fact that Mr Riley happens to be a member of the Clerks’ Association, and Mr Coleman comes to light.”

(Interruption)

Mr Riley, MHR : “That’s a lie!”

Mr T Arthur : “It is not a lie. I want this committee appointed, so that it can clear me in the matter. I am prepared to do my best to help root out the culprit responsible for the ‘crook’ ballot boxes.”

Investigation Committee Appointed

The motion was carried, and Messrs Howie, O’Reilly, Rees, Smith and Willis were appointed as a committee of investigation. Mr Willis asked for a definition of the committee’s powers. The President replied that the resolution gave the committee authority to command everything at the disposal of the Executive in the matter. It was also empowered to hear anybody and seek whatever information it desired.

Debate Resumed on Executive’s Report

Mr O’Brien (Painters’ Union) moved the resumption of the debate on matters leading up to Mr Dooley’s expulsion. This was carried unanimously. It was decided to deal with the appointment of Mr Suttor to the Upper House, and the subsequent expulsion of Mr Dooley, as set out in the Executive’s report, also clauses 4 and 5 of the minority report dealing with the Dooley-Suttor trouble and the expulsion of Mr Dooley.

Mr McLelland moved the adoption of the Executive’s report on the matter. He said that when it was before the Executive for consideration there was much in it with which he agreed, such as concerning the appointment of Mr Suttor to the Upper House. There were other portions to which he took exception, and because of that he did not vote for the adoption of the report.

An Executive Plot

Mr Ely (minority section of the Executive) said that the minority section of the Executive disapproved of the Executive’s handling of the Dooley-Suttor trouble. The matter was brought before the Executive without any evidence whatever. The only evidence they had was based upon the
word of a man named Hynes, and on that the Executive adopted the report. But before doing so they handed it out to the press. It had been declared that there was but one copy of the report in existence; yet it had appeared in the press verbatim days before it was adopted. That proved conclusively that there was a conspiracy to destroy Dooley. The Executive knew full well that Dooley wasn’t going to sit down under that attack and not reply to it. They knew that Dooley would reply, and they took precautions (in January) to adopt a motion that anybody going to the press with recriminatory statements would be automatically declared outside the Movement. The whole thing was a plot. Dooley was to be expelled if he replied to the statements in the press and the report was given out to bait him. For that act the whole Executive should be thrown out of the Movement.

The Executive knew there would be a howl from the leagues, so they muzzled free speech, taking fine care that the rank and file should not be allowed to raise a protest. Yet these were the people who a short time ago held up their hands for freedom of speech. When Mr Dooley apparently had gone to the press in reply he was not invited by the Executive to explain if he had authorised the matter published. It was taken for granted that what appeared in the press was correct, and automatically ruled him out. The whole thing was a move to get rid of Dooley and get McGirr into the leadership. He did not think Conference would stand for the Executive putting a man out of the Movement without giving him the right of defence.

“Arrogant Presumption”

Mr A Blakeley, MHR, said that the character of certain men in the Movement had been impugned. They had been dishonoured. The expulsion of Mr Dooley was the extraordinary action of an extraordinary body of men. The only evidence which the committee had and upon which it based its decision was the word of Mr Hynes. Yet this was taken as full and as complete as possible for the “drowning” of a man and his honour. Was there even a capitalistic court that would convict a man on such evidence? The arrogant presumption of the Executive in declaring 23 members of the Parliamentary Party outside the Labor Movement was the most stupid thing ever done. These men were taken from the workshops, the mines, the quarries and the bush because of their honour and character and placed on the highest pedestals in the Movement. Then the Executive came along and expelled them. In the same way the Labor leagues, because they would not be bludgeoned, were declared bogus.
Free Speech Stifled

After that the turmoil started. It came first only as a ripple, then as a wave, then as a mountainous sea. The Executive was like the woman who tried to sweep the sea back with a broom. They said, “Thou shalt not criticise. We are above criticism. You shall not discuss this action of ours”. For 600 long years our predecessors had given their life-blood for free speech. There had been an eloquent speech on the matter that very night. They had experienced the violence of Tory autocrats in Australia in past days. There was Irvine’s infamous attempt to stifle free speech. There was the attempt by Wade in New South Wales. But none succeeded. Hughes tried it during the war, but in his maddest moments he did not contemplate action such as was taken by the Executive. (Cheers) There was surely a sense of justice in the Conference, and he relied upon delegates doing the fair thing.

Case for the Executive

Mr HL Brown put the case for the Executive. He said the Dooley matter had been investigated by the Disputes Committee, which made its report to the Executive. The Executive asked for additional evidence, but none was forthcoming. He moved a motion that the matter be referred to this Conference, but subsequently withdrew it, and the committee’s report was endorsed by the Executive. Regarding the report in the press, he said it was unfortunate. (Laughter) They tried to find out who gave the report for publication, but failed to locate the culprit. (More laughter) He said that Mr Dooley was not expelled for any connection with the Sutor business. It was for making recriminatory statements in the press. The debate was adjourned till tonight (Wednesday).

Labor and Immigration

A letter was received from the West Australian Branch of the ALP suggesting the advisability of establishing Labor immigration reception depots, in view of the facts that there were large numbers of unemployed already in Australia, that boat loads of immigrants were arriving, and many of them were drifting to the cities, and swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

After a short debate it was decided to appoint a committee to go into the matter and report back to Conference as to the best policy to be adopted regarding immigration. Messrs Howie, Garden, Baddeley, Shielos and Ely were appointed members of the committee.
The Irish Envoys

A letter was received from the Irish Envoys' Defence League, protesting against the violation of the rights of free speech and trial by jury by the Nationalist Government in the action taken regarding the Irish envoys, and asking that Mr D Grant be allowed to address the Conference on the matter. After Mr Grant had addressed delegates the following motion was carried unanimously:

“That this annual Conference of the ALP, recalling the struggle and sacrifices of the Labor Movement in the past to establish the elementary right of free speech, condemns the act of the authorities in prosecuting, condemning and punishing the Irish Republican representatives, and declares that the contemplated deportation of these men without even a trial by jury, constitutes a grave menace to the liberty of Australian workers, and in addition a gross violation of British justice. And that Senator Gardiner, Charlton and Dunn be requested to convey this resolution to the responsible authorities in this State. And that the matter be also referred to the Labor Council of New South Wales for its cooperation.”

Executive Positions

Nominations Received

The following nominations were received by the returning officers (Mr W Gibbs) for the various Executive positions of the ALP:

Vice-Presidents: E Stein, AE O'Brien, G Rowlands, G Buckland, J Tyrrell, EC Magrath.
General Secretary: W Carey, JB Dooley.
Interstate Executive: J Howie, AE O'Brien, TP Holloway, RD Bramston, BW Sheiles, JM Baddeley, MLA, and W Carbines.

There were 144 nominations for the Executive, of whom 30 are to be selected.

Mr Gibbs announced that he had decided to ask a member of the Federal Executive to be with him during the whole time the ballot was being dealt with. He was doing this not so much to protect himself as for the members of the Movement.

It was resolved that the President should be elected on the preferential system.

The ballot will take place today (Wednesday).
Day 4, Wednesday, 6 June 1923

Mr Dooley Re-Admitted. Old Labor Executive Swept Out of Office. Further Accusations of Crook Ballots.

Last Wednesday night the NSW Annual Conference resumed the debate on the question of Mr Dooley’s expulsion and the appointment of Mr Suttor to the Upper House.

After preliminary business had been disposed of, Mr J O’Brien (Painters’ Union) said that Mr Dooley had been expelled for exercising the sacred right of free speech. Delegates would remember the things said by Mr McGirr against Mr Dooley at the last Conference. A Committee which investigated the charges made found they were not true either in substance or fact. If ever a man deserved censure it was McGirr, yet the Executive took no action. It appointed him leader of the Parliamentary Party.

The Executive had allowed personal animosity to outweigh all consideration for Mr Dooley, and it was due to the Conference to see that injustice in the Movement should not triumph, and that every person should receive the consideration that he or she was entitled to. He trusted that the time would never come when it would allow any section or faction to allocate powers to itself, and use them in a desperate manner. And they would not allow any faction to do just as it liked and risk the integrity and honour of the Labor Movement, just as the majority Executive had done. The Executive should set a high standard of morality and efficiency. He was satisfied that the members of the Executive had not done their duty, and had succeeded in tearing the Movement asunder. It was now the duty of the Conference to bring the factions together in one whole. There was a great necessity for closer organisation, and he, as an industrialist, would say that it was absolutely necessary that the industrial side should join forces with the political Movement.

President Power Addresses Conference

The President (Mr Power) vacated the chair and spoke on behalf of the Executive. He said that whatever the verdict of the Conference might be, he wanted delegates to remember that the beginning of the trouble was not in 1922 or 1923 – it had been developed since 1914 or 1915. Because of the opinions decidedly formed it had been decided in 1916 to take the very drastic action of taking the control of the Labor Movement out of the hands of members of Parliament. They had gone to the other extreme and practically divorced members of Parliament from the control of the Movement. He had come to the conclusion that this action was not wise. He now considered it would have been wiser to let some members of
Parliament sit on the Executive. At the time he had voted against it, but the course of time had shown that he was wrong.

It was the duty of the Annual Conference to finalise matters that were brought before it, and not to refer them to the incoming Executive. The McGirr matter had been brought before the last Conference. He had been stupid enough to believe that after the exposures made at the Conference and the way in which the Conference had expressed itself upon them that things like that could never recur. But this had not proved to be the case. In the course of time along came the circular from Messrs Dooley, Charlton, and Gardiner. There was nothing in the circular that anyone could take exception to – (hear, hear) – but the press had taken it up like manna from Heaven against the Labor Movement. Messrs Dooley, Charlton and Gardiner had come forward and told the press that they had not meant what the press had thought they did. That had ended the matter, so he (the speaker) had stupidly thought they did. Then along had come a gentleman named Hynes who had made allegations concerning the Suttor case, upon which a report was subsequently presented to the Executive. The adoption of that report by the Executive had been a grave and grievous injustice. (Hear, hear) Why? Because it contained statements as facts that were not facts at all. This report had been stolen and given to the press by a man worthy of contempt.

“A Grievious Blunder”

If ever there was anything a Labor man would fight [for] it was the canon law of British justice that they could not declare a man guilty of an offence until he was proved guilty by a competent tribunal. What would they think of a jury that came back into court and confessed that they could not find the man guilty, but thought that he was? He would say that his friends on the Executive made a grievous blunder when they took the course of action. Mr Ely had made a statement that as part of the plot to expel Mr Dooley a certain resolution was carried. Mr Ely was under a misapprehension. While the Executive’s circular was being discussed a statement appeared in the press under the name of Mr McGirr, and he thereupon took the responsibility of writing a letter to Mr McGirr pointing out that the Labor Movement would not tolerate such action. He referred the matter to the Executive and it endorsed his action. Following upon that it was decided by the Executive to issue circulars to all the Parliamentary members, point out that recriminatory criticism in the press would be punished. Then Mr Dooley came back and made a statement. The most serious problem arising from these events was the government of the Movement between the Conferences. “I put it to you” he concluded, “that if the Labor Movement is to survive it must not sacrifice that keystone of solidarity that had sustained it since its birth.
The Labor Movement must demand that its supporters shall observe the authority of its governing bodies.”

**Belief in Industrial Control**

Mr JS Garden (Sailmakers’ Union) said he was against both the Executive’s and Minority Executive’s report on the subject before the Conference. In his opinion both were incorrect. They were mere statements with nothing to bear them out. He believed in industrial control and every industrialist believed the same. If the Executive made mistakes between Conference it was for the Conference to deal with them. He intended to do all he could to clean up the Labor Movement. He wrote articles in 1921 that there were “crook” ballot boxes and faked tickets. He was attacked for making those statements. The Conference should also deal with the faked tickets used at selection ballots. It was the duty of Conference to expel every man connected with “crook” work. He approved of the Executive expelling Suttor, though the Executive was to blame for not seeing that Suttor was ineligible for appointment. They blamed Dooley for something for which they themselves were to blame. As to the Committee’s report being published in the press before it came before the Executive for consideration, anybody would have done what Dooley did in replying to it. Although that action was wrong, anybody would have done the same thing. In those circumstances they were wrong in expelling Dooley from the Movement. He (the speaker) wouldn’t stand for one man being fired out on the word of another man. He would want to see some facts.

**Mr Dooley Addresses Delegates**

Mr Dooley rose to address the Conference. He was given an ovation by delegates which lasted for some time. He said: “On this platform last night was a gentleman named Mr Donald Grant. It reminded me of a slogan used two elections ago, ‘fifteen years for fifteen words’. It was a savage sentence imposed upon Mr Grant. It reminded me of a slogan used two elections ago, ‘fifteen years for fifteen words’. It was a savage sentence imposed upon Mr Grant.

“I have received a sentence from the last Executive”, continued Mr Dooley, “not of fifteen years, but of a lifetime; that is as far as certain officials are concerned. I am to be thrown out of this Movement for the term of my natural life – not for fifteen words, but for two words – ‘uncouth crooks’. I heard the speech last night, and could feel the hearts and the pulses of this gathering throbbing against the allegations of a harsh sentence, of an unfair delay, an unfair decision against women here from another country to put their case before the people. I hope that delegates to this Conference will show as clear and unanimous a decision when the verdict is passed on my case in this Movement today.
Mr Dooley issues a Challenge

“During the last few months superhuman efforts have been made to force me out of the Movement. It was said that bigger men than ‘Jim’ Dooley had gone to other parties and that I would go too; but I told the leagues and the unions that nothing in the world would drive me out of the Movement. All sorts of threats have been made. I have been threatened with all sorts of exposures. My good name, my moral character, my integrity, have been impugned broadcast. If any men in this Movement or out of it can prove that Jim Dooley ever in his political life took a dishonest shilling, my resignation to the Party and as a Member of Parliament goes in tonight.

“I remember that when a charge of corruption was made against Mr Tudor”, said Mr Dooley, “Mr Hughes was good enough to say, ‘I don’t believe it’. And I know that when a man becomes leader of a party he has to put up with that sort of thing; but if anyone has anything against me I ask to be charged openly.

The Hynes Charge

“Mr Charlton, Senator Gardiner, and I made our suggestions for the betterment of the Party quite openly, but at this time charges were made against me, not straight out, but a circular was delivered in the box of every member of the Labor Party except myself. The circular stated that a man names Hynes charged me with faking ballot tickets or taking money to make some members eligible for the Legislative Council. I put my case before the Party, who treated it with contempt, and the man responsible for the circular was not game to get up and defend his own circular. (Hoots and cheers) The circular was put in a certain paper, and it was said that it was going to kill me. But I might be like the picture of the man they could not hang.

“The matter came to the Executive, which referred it to the Disputes Committee, which wrote to me asking me to give evidence before that Committee. I did not think it possible that a body of men and women would start to hold an inquiry if they knew the source from which the charges emanated. I thought the proper thing to do was to inform that Committee of the character and reputation of the man who made the charges. I was under the impression that fair-minded people who were out for justice, and not for my blood, wanted an explanation, and that that explanation would be sufficient to convince ordinary intelligent and reasoning people.
Mr Dooley's Record

“I say deliberately”, declared Mr Dooley, “that no matter what evidence was brought before that Committee it had been decided already that Jim Dooley was going to be expelled to make room for Mr Gregory McGirr. No matter what evidence was given, that was the determination.

“I am approaching my seventeenth year in the Parliament of the country”, proceeded Mr Dooley, “and after that period I am supposed to have land, property, and shares. But I say I have not got £500, nor £300, to my credit in land, shares, or anything else. If anyone can prove that I have £500 he can have half of it. (Laughter) I haven’t even got a house that I have paid off. If I had been a money-grabber I would not have been expelled from the Labor Movement today – I would have been leader of the Majority Executive. (Loud cheers)

“I have been for 26 years trying to the best of my ability to put the case for Labor before the people. After coming from Queensland to New South Wales, I was not long in showing to the people what my ideas and ideals were. I never courted a seat in Parliament, and neither have I tried to sneak another man’s seat. (Applause)

“I have done as much organising work as any man in the Labor Movement without limelight.” (Cheers)

Mrs Fowler: “You organised Goulburn, didn’t you, Mr Dooley?”

Mr Dooley: “I organised the Goulburn electorate, the old Cooma electorate, and that is the one political sin of which I am ashamed.” (Laughter)

“To Get Me Out of the Leadership”

Mr Dooley said he had taken a prominent part in the great anti-conscription fight. He had been elected leader of the Labor Party at that time, but he stood down for the late Mr John Storey. He was prepared to stand down again, but he would never give the leadership over to some wealthy Conservative. (Cheers) Even if the Communists backed up Mr McGirr he would not do so. He had tried to keep the Movement together.

“I fought as good a fight as I could”, continued Mr Dooley, referring to the last campaign. “I fought a good fight and a clean fight, and if you want a man to fight a ‘crook’ fight, or a dirty fight, you can get some other man to do it. Jim Dooley won’t do it.” (Cheers)

Tampering with the Books

Mr Dooley read a statement signed by HA Patterson of the Mount Victoria Branch of the ALP, and declared before Mr John M Wilson, JP. This stated, inter alia, that Mr Suttor had joined the Mount Victoria Branch in 1916. The reason that this had not been established at first was
that the book in which the membership had been recorded had become
dilapidated. Mr Patterson swore that upon a loose and displaced leaf
there had been discovered the records of Mr Suttor’s joining the ALP.
The mover had been Mr Lindsay, and Mr Matthews had been the
seconder. Overtures were made to the Secretary of the league suggesting
that money should be got from Dooley and Suttor by tampering with the
records of the league. The Secretary of the league refused to listen to the
suggestion. However, access to the books and ticket butts was gained,
and it was made to appear that Mr Suttor was ineligible. Mr Patterson
had come down from Mount Victoria on Monday to meet Hynes face to
face, but perhaps Hynes heard of it, and kept away.

Even if Mr Suttor’s appointment was not in order, continued Mr
Dooley, even if he did not have continuity of membership, even if he was
not a financial member, he (Mr Dooley) was not responsible. The
Executive, if it held him responsible, was imposing upon him a duty that
had never been imposed before, a duty that was unreasonable. Mr
Suttor’s name was 39th on the list of 300 names that had been submitted
to the Executive, which had endorsed it, and sent it on to the Caucus.
Those applicants who were not elected thought that the inclusion of Mr
Suttor’s name was wrong, but those who were elected thought it was
right. (Laughter)

Will Withdraw Nothing

“I was publicly insulted”, he continued, “in the press of New South
Wales by the Executive of my own Party, not only in the stolen report,
but by a report that appeared in the Labor News over certain signatures
on February 24, and was copied by other papers on the following
Saturday. It was proved that they put in, not the full Suttor report, but
only the insulting portions so far as I was concerned. (Cries of shame)
After that report was given to the press, and the members of the
Executive had broken their own rule, I attacked them in the press, but
not till they had attacked me did I attack them. (Cheers) I attacked them.
I used strong words, and perhaps I had better take this opportunity of
apologising for the words I used. They were not strong enough.
(Laughter and cheers) I don’t withdraw one word of what I said then.
(Cheers) I don’t withdraw the crossing of a ‘t’ or the dotting of an ‘i’.
(Cheers) I meant everything I said, and I don’t withdraw one word of it,
and you can do what you like with me. (Renewed cheers)

“The men who had been connected with the report adopted by the
Executive had never done anything to fight the Nationalists”, he said.
“They had never gone on the public platform. They had sent out reports,
including one attacking Mr Percy Brookfield.” (Cries of “shame”)

Mr Dooley stated that he had placed his position before the
Conference, given his motives, and explained his financial standing.
After the fact of the faked ballot boxes, he did not think there was another word to say. If he had never done anything else than to bring this Conference of men and women together he had done something of value to the Movement, and he did not think that anyone could put him out of it.

Mr Howie’s Amendment

After the prolonged cheering had died down, Mr Howie (Coopers’ Union) moved as an amendment:

“After hearing both the Majority and the Minority Executive reports on the Dooley-Sutter affair, and the full discussion that has followed, this Conference is of the opinion that the only satisfactory solution to the problem before Conference, the only solution upon which the Labor Party can be successfully reorganised and the victory for Labor achieved is:

“That this Conference holds that Executive control is a fundamental principle of Labor organisation, and endorses this principle for the future.

“This Conference further declares that the appointment of Mr Sutter as a member of the Legislative Council was not in the interests of the Labor Movement of New South Wales, and confirms the action of the Executive in expelling Mr Sutter from membership of the Party.

“Conference deplores the lack of control on the part of the Executive regarding the issuing of the report by one of its members to the capitalist press, and at the same time disapproves of the recriminations indulged in by Mr Dooley in reply.

“Conference considers that both parties have made mistakes in the matter, and that the mistakes made by Mr Dooley were not so serious as to justify his expulsion. Conference, therefore, reinstates Mr Dooley as a member of the Australian Labor Party.”

Mr AE O’Brien (Musicians’ Union) took a point of order, on the ground that the amendment contained a series of proposals. The President ruled the amendment in order. Mr O’Brien moved dissent, and the vote went against the President’s ruling. The motion was then ruled out.

After Dooley’s Blood

Mrs Fowler (Botany) said she was a member of the Executive that had dealt with the nominations for the Upper House. Of all the “stunts” ever
worked on a man, the one worked on Mr Dooley respecting the Suttor appointment was absolutely the most cowardly she had ever heard of. (Hear, hear) From the hour that the Executive had taken office she firmly believed that they were out after the blood of Mr Dooley, and the blood of any other man whom they thought had a firm Labor seat. (Hear, hear) If the Committee that dealt with the nominations had done its duty it would have called for the lists of the Mount Victorian Branch, and if Suttor’s name was found to be not on the lists the Committee should have sent for the books. (Hear, hear) It was no use them saying Suttor’s name was never questioned – everyone knew it was questioned. They were out after Mr Dooley’s blood, and Mr Dooley had been tried and found guilty before he was examined by the Committee. (Applause)

**Could Not Find Name in Records**

Mr Kelly (AWU) said he was a member of the committee appointed by the Executive to investigate the Dooley-Suttor business. The members of that committee were impartial persons, who would not show bias in any way. (Laughter and cries of dissent) So far as he knew there was not one man on that committee that had not a kindly feeling towards Mr Dooley. (Renewed laughter and cries of dissent) It was, he said, an astounding thing that, though it was stated that for some years Suttor had been a member of the Mt Victoria Branch, his name could not be found on any of the books, and Suttor could not produce any membership tickets, though allowed some time to do so.

He could not say that Dooley knew that Suttor was not a member of the Mount Victoria League. He would not say that now. But they examined the books of the league and Suttor’s name did not appear in them.

**Why the Executive Took Action**

Mr Hutchison (Executive) defended the action of the Executive. He was the member who had moved for the expulsion of Mr Dooley. Mr Dooley had given the Conference evidence he did not bring before the Executive. When Mr Dooley was expelled they conveyed the information to the Parliamentary Party, asking the Party to elect a deputy leader. It refused to do so, and threw the gauntlet down to the Executive. Then the Executive took the only action it could take under the circumstances.

Senator Gardiner urged them to settle the business. There was no charge against Mr Dooley. They should let the matter go on the voices, and not bring it down to the level of Hynes by even taking a vote on it.
**Crooks and Hangers-On**

Mrs Dwyer (Executive), who made an attack on Mr Dooley, claimed that the Executive was justified in what it had done. Mr Dooley had called them crooks and hangers-on. Addressing the Miners’ delegates, she said that if they did not vote to support the Executive’s action they would be recreant to their trust. She added that among the appointments to the Upper House there was not one representing the miners.

Mr Willis interrupted, whereupon Mrs Dwyer charged him with trying to get into the Upper House. Mr Willis replied that the late Mr Storey offered on two occasions to put him there, but he turned the offer down.

Mrs Dwyer said that if that were so then he was recreant to his trust.

The Conference was adjourned till the following evening (Thursday).

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**Day 5, Thursday, 7 June 1923**

**Mr Bailey Issues a Writ**

When Conference resumed last Thursday night it was announced that Mr Bailey had caused to be issued out of the Supreme Court of New South Wales a writ against Mr Dooley claiming £1000 for alleged defamation of character. The announcement was received with vigorous hooting. Mr Dooley, in a short explanation, said that on the previous night he had stated that the value of his total assets was not more than £500. He now wanted to say that it was nowhere near that, and if anybody served him with a writ for £1000 there was no chance of getting it. (Cheers)

Mr O’Brien (Musicians’ Union) then moved: “That having heard Mr Dooley, we accept his explanation and restore him to the Movement in full confidence.” He thought the Executive was right in some directions, but not in others. He was astonished that no reply had been made by the Executive regarding the “crook” ballot boxes. It was common knowledge in the hotel bars who made the boxes and who gave the order. He deplored recriminations in the Movement. For several years not one motion of a constructive character had been passed. It was time they got down to solid business.

**More Justice in Capitalistic Courts**

Mr Moate (Marine Stewards) moved, as a further amendment, which was later accepted as an addendum to the first amendment:

> “While supporting the principle of Executive Control, according to the constitution of the ALP, this Conference declares that Mr Dooley was unjustly expelled and recommends that he be reinstated with full continuity of
membership, and that all references to the matter be expunged from the records of the Movement.”

He said that Mr Dooley had put up a case that could not be challenged. The Executive’s case was based on mere hearsay, and in putting their case Executive members dragged herrings across the trail. Even in the capitalist courts Dooley would have got more justice than he got from the Executive.

Mr Walsh (Goulburn) said that on the previous night Mr Howie, aided and abetted by “the patriarch of Moscow” (Mr Garden), had tried to shelve the issue by moving an amendment. Mr Howie said he had stood for fair play, yet before he (Howie) had heard Mr Dooley’s explanation he had drafted an amendment to cloud the issue. He also charged Mr Howie with trying to side-step the full investigation of the “crook” ballot boxes. As things were going in the Movement, a man had only to enter public life and he became an object of suspicion right away. Mr Hutchison had stated on the previous evening that he was one of the chief actors of the great drama. Mr Hutchison was nothing of the sort, but simply the willing tool of the majority. The speaker’s further attacks on the Communist delegates were drowned in uproar.

Miss Golding (Annandale) claimed that the Minority Executive’s report was small and vicious, and contained deliberate lies. The Committee investigating the Dooley-Suttor business went into all the evidence available before coming to a decision. She did not vote for Mr Dooley’s expulsion because of the Suttor business, nor for recriminatory remarks, but because he was the best friend the capitalists ever had. Referring to the publication of the Investigating Committee’s report in the press before it was authorised, she laid the blame on members of the minority section.

Mrs Melville (Minority Executive) denied that members of the minority section were responsible for the Committee’s report getting into the press. It was due to the action of a member of the Majority Executive. She claimed the Executive had passed Mr Dooley out of the Movement without giving him a chance to defend himself.

**Will Support New Executive**

Mr Alam (Dubbo) claimed that the Conference had been very cleverly manipulated. He supported the Executive’s action in expelling Mr Dooley, claiming that any man or woman who ran counter to the Executive’s mandate was a ‘scab’. (Uproar) He stood for solidarity in the Movement, and now that a new Executive was elected he was prepared to support it. He claimed that the ‘Reds’ had got control of the Movement, and so long as men like Garden, Willis, Howie, Baddeley, and others had anything to do with it they would never have a Labor Government. However, he intended to vote for the reinstatement of Mr Dooley.
**Faked Tickets**

Mr Roberts (Storemen and Packers) supported the Minority Executive’s report. His organisation had had some experience with “crook” tickets at selection ballots. He gave the Executive a facsimile of the “crook” tickets, and the signatures on them, but the Executive did nothing. The Labor Movement could not stand for such actions as that. His union believed that Mr Dooley had been wrongly expelled, also that Rule 33 was wrongly in the Rule Book. When he and other members of the Darlinghurst league protested against the Executive’s action they were expelled by a tyrannical Executive.

Mr Heffron (Marine Stewards) urged the delegates to get together and present a united front to the capitalists. The only man who had made an honest attempt to cleanse the Movement was Harry Boote, of *The Worker*. He moved as a further amendment, “That this Conference declares that the appointment of Mr Suttor to the Upper House was not in the interests of the Labor Movement, and confirms the action of the Executive in expelling Mr Suttor from the Movement. This Conference considers both parties have made mistakes in the matter. The Conference deplores the lack of control over the members of the Executive in connection with the issuing of the Suttor report to the press, and at the same time disapproves of the recriminations. The Conference considers that the mistakes made by Mr Dooley were not so serious as to justify his expulsion, and reinstates Mr Dooley as a member of the Party.”

**Mr Mutch Attacks Communists**

Mr TD Mutch, MLA, attacked the Communists. He said that certain industrialists who pretended to want to cleanse the Movement were responsible for some of the vilest literature against Dooley. They had tried their best to damn him. There was a sinister movement in the Conference between the Communists and the group led by Mr Bailey. He regretted that a lady delegate had stooped so low as to insinuate that a member of the Minority Executive had given the committee’s report on the Dooley-Suttor business to the press. He could say that it was not given to one newspaper, but to three. Whoever was responsible did his work carefully. He contended that the whole trouble arose out of a secret meeting at Centennial Park, at which Mr Bailey was present. When the Federal Executive was sitting in Sydney recently, behind locked doors in Macdonell House, they were amazed to find that reports of their deliberations were getting into the press. The only member of the Executive who was taking copious notes was Mr Bailey. (Uproar)

A delegate said that the matter was now *sub judice.*
What Happened at Night-Time

Mr Mutch said there was no sub judice about him. He wasn’t afraid of Bailey’s writs. Bailey wasn’t going to close his mouth with a writ. A certain lawyer’s office could be plastered with writs that had been issued and not gone on with. One night, in company with Messrs Lang and Loughlin, he followed Mr Bailey, Mr Brown and Mr Hutchison. They went into Bathurst Street, and reporters followed them. Mr Bailey was on the dark side of the road, and another man gave the notes to the other pressman. Mr Bailey wanted to be Minister for Works, and Mr McGirr Minister for Lands, but John Storey would not have them, so they did nothing but engineer, organise, and attack all the time the Labor Ministry was in power. He challenged Mr Bailey to stand up in Conference and defend himself of these charges. He pitied those who were under his influence for the position they found themselves in that night.

Mr Mutch Produces Faked Ticket Butt

Mr Mutch said that when a certain man wanted to run for his (Mutch’s) seat, a ticket was faked for him in the Daceyville league, and his name was written over the name of a man who had gone to New Zealand, and who could not return. Mr Mutch produced the butt of the ticket book and held it up for delegates to see. Anyone could see the two names on it. The matter was brought before the same Disputes Committee which dealt with Mr Dooley, and the Executive wrote to the league that faking had not been proved, but warned the League not to write two names on the same ticket. (Laughter)

Mr Bailey Breaks the Silence

Mr Bailey, MLA, who needed a deal of persuasion to take the floor, denied the allegations made against him. He challenged Mr Mutch to name any reporter or any member of the Party to whom improper suggestions had been made.

Mr Mutch: If you want one specific instance I will give it to you. When you produced Talbot’s letter in the Labor Caucus you refused to give it to Mr Storey before taking a photographic copy of it. Shortly afterwards an exact copy of the letter appeared in Smith’s Weekly.

Mr Bailey said he had taken that letter to the late John Storey the day after he got it. Mr Storey said he did not think any good could come out of investigating it. He (Bailey) replied, “Well, you’re the leader, and if anything comes out of it, you are to blame, and not I.” Mr Bailey added that so long as he held that letter no living person saw it but John Storey. Mr Bailey said that he had nothing to do with the meeting in Centennial Park, but the place was selected as a precaution against Mr Fred Flowers
attending, who was a conscriptionist. He had documents in his possession proving that a certain well-known business man had given £1000 to the election fund. “Now, I ask you,” he continued, “why that gentleman gave that £1000. He gave that money so that he would have the members of the Cabinet in his power, and to compel them to work his ‘boodle’ schemes for him. Those were the reasons.” ( Interruption and dissent ) “I want to say this, no capitalist has ever paid my fare to America”.

Mr Mutch: “Do you mean that someone paid mine? I paid my own fare”.

That Trip to America

Continuing, Mr Bailey alleged that Mr Dooley and Mr Mutch, prior to their leaving for America, went to the Caucus, and arranged for a resolution to be carried saying that they were going at the instigation of the Party. He ( Mr Bailey ) had objected to this being done unless they placed their cards on the table. It was reported that Mr Dooley and Mr Mutch were going to investigate industrial matters. Where was their report upon the matters they had told the people they were going to investigate? ( Uproar ) Labor had been defeated at the last elections because of the type of some of the men in the Movement. Another cause of Labor’s defeat was its failure to lay down a decent land policy. ( Uproar ) Labor proposals with regard to land matters had been taken to England and submitted to the moneyed institutions. Three parts of the Labor men if they were put back into office would be afraid. ( Uproar )

Regarding Hynes, Mr Bailey said he knew nothing about him. He had never seen him, nor would he know him if he saw him. He challenged anybody who said he knew anything against him to prove their statements. He ( Mr Bailey ) had never done anything detrimental to the Labor Movement. Everything he had done had been fair and square and above-board. ( Cries of “Oh! Oh!” ) The only thing he represented Labor for was to help to put Labor’s platform on the statute books. ( Applause and dissent )

Mr Mutch, in an explanation, said that he had paid his own fare to America out of the proceeds of the sale of two blocks of land at Dee Why, one of which he sold to Mr Edward Riley, MHR.

Mrs Seery’s Protest

Mrs Seery said she objected to being thrown off the Executive as an “uncouth crook”. It was a grave reflection against her character, and until the Movement removed that stigma from her name she would never stand on a Labor platform again. Mr Dooley, or somebody else, would have to be man enough to say that it was not true. She demanded an apology from Mr Dooley for the sake of her children.
Hynes' Sworn Statement

Mr Lang, MLA, said he intended to substantiate a statement made by Mr Dooley, because Mr Dooley had made it on his authority, and for which Mr Bailey had issued a writ claiming damages. First he wanted to say that Mr Bailey’s statement about Mr Loughlin and his Land Bill was untrue. Mr Storey may have taken the draft of the Land Bill with him to London, but he desired to say that Mr Loughlin’s first Land Bill was not drafted in accordance with the Labor platform. It went further. The second bill, however, was drafted in accordance with the platform of the Party. Mr Bailey had stated that he had never seen Mr Michael Hynes in his life. It was on this man’s charges that Mr Dooley had been expelled.

Mr Lang then proceeded to read a document which, he said, was a sworn statement made by Mr Hynes on May 14, 1923. In part the document read as follows:

“Owing to the internal differences that existed in the Parliamentary Labor Party, I wrote a letter to Mr Greg McGirr, advising him that the faction opposing him was guilty of malpractices concerning Mr Dooley, and an appointment to the Upper House. But I got no reply from Mr McGirr. Three days later I received a letter from Mr Bailey, asking me to attend the office at the AWU rooms. I attended the office and met Mr Bailey, who told me that Mr McGirr had given him a letter. Mr Bailey asked me what I knew. I informed him of my dealings with Mr Dooley. I told Mr Bailey that I would make a statement upon condition it was not made public, but distributed among members of the Parliamentary Party.”

Proceeding to read the statement Mr Lang said: “On the next day a report of the statement appeared in the press. I did not authorise its publication. On the same day I saw Mr Bailey, and he told me that he suspected Mr Cecil Murphy, MLA, who was the friend of Mr Dooley. Later on I came to the conclusion that it was Mr Bailey himself. It has been insinuated that I have been paid for bringing charges against Mr Dooley. That is not true. As an ardent Labor supporter my only object was to clean the Movement. I admit I did ask Mr Bailey to give me a railway pass for the country. Mr Bailey told me he would do so. Upon seeing him later he told me the Labor Bureau would not give a pass unless I had employment to go to. Mr Bailey said, ‘Will a couple of pounds do?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ Mr Bailey then took me to the office, and I received the money.”

Mr Lang, in conclusion, said he did not ask the Conference to either believe or disbelieve the sworn statement he had just read. He challenged Mr Bailey to issue a writ against Hynes. He (Bailey) had said that he had never seen Hynes, who swore differently. Mr Bailey had to stand up to that.

Mr Lang, at the conclusion of his speech, handed the sworn declaration to the President (Mr Power).
Challenge to the Communists

Mr Davies (Northern Miners) attacked the Communists, and challenged Mr Howie and other Communists to return with the miners’ delegates and debate the question before the miners. He charged Mr Howie with attempting to camouflage the issues before Conference. Mr Howie’s motion to investigate the “crook” ballot boxes was loaded. How long did Mr Howie expect, in view of his tactics, to retain the support of the workers in Sydney? (Uproar) He accused Messrs Howie and Bailey of running a ticket for the Executive. The Communists had tried to butt into the miners’ trouble. They advocated a general strike, and the establishment of communal kitchens on the Maitland field. (Laughter)

Taking the Vote

Mr J McGarry moved that the question be put. Intense excitement prevailed, and efforts were made by supporters of the Executive to prevent a vote being taken. Finally the President (Mr Power) said he was going on with the business even if it took all night. (Applause) After Mr McLelland replied, the vote was taken. It was decided to add Mr Heffron’s amendment to the original motion (for the adoption of the clauses of the Majority report) and to add Mr Moate’s amendment as an addendum to the amendment (for the adoption of the clauses of the Minority report). The amendment was then put to the Conference and, on a division, was declared carried by 180 votes to 79. This was a decisive victory for the anti-Executive party, and brought forth loud cheering from delegates. The Conference adjourned till the following evening (Friday).

Day 6, Friday, 8 June 1923

The New Executive

When Conference resumed last Friday night, the returning officer, Mr W Gibbs, officially announced the result of the ballot. The figures disclosed that there has been a wholesale sweeping out of office of the old Executive – only one member (Mrs K Dwyer) succeeding in securing re-election. Such a decisive defeat of an Executive has never before been known in Labor’s ranks, and indicates just what delegates thought of the autocratic rule of the Executive during the last few months.

For the Presidency, Mr AC Willis was elected with 157 votes. Mr J O’Brien secured 124 votes, while the retiring president (Mr J Power) was badly defeated, securing only 67 votes, the block vote of the Bailey section. For Vice-Presidents, Messrs EC Magrath (169) and J Tyrrell (163)
were elected – Mr GH Buckland being defeated with 104 votes to his credit. Mr W Carey was re-elected Secretary with 165 votes – his opponent (Mr JB Dooley) securing 60 votes.

Messrs J M Baddeley (187) and J Howie (122) were elected members of the Interstate Executive, while Messrs A Blakeley (189), W Carey (141), EC Magrath (180), J O’Brien (156), JF O’Reilly (184) and J Tyrrell (162) were elected delegates to the Interstate Conference.

For the General Executive the following were elected: D Rees 175, JF O’Reilly 168, W Mills 168, Mrs Melville 157, D Clyne 155, J Kilburn 149, W Ely 148, WJ Gibb 133, J Graves 132, T Lonergan 128, F Conroy 126, GF Smith 124, J Flannagan 122, J Culbert 122, T Doyle 146, Mrs L Fowler 144, G Buckley 139, PV Stokes 137, J Mostyn 136, JT Sweeney 133, W Carbines 133, JS Garden 121, J Beasley 119, J Concannon 118, Mrs K Dwyer 117, M Swiney 116, A Rutherford 114, Miss S Johnston 113, Miss S Mitchell 112.

The following were elected alternate delegates to the General Executive: H Knight 112, Mrs Fay 111, LM Ryan 109, R Stapleton 107, GBains 106, TP Holloway 106, OH Connell 103, GC Bodkin 90, Mrs Bailey 88, T Bartle 86, R Heffron 85, C Hackett 84, JM Kelly 84, J Potter 84, Miss Golding 102, Mrs Seery 101, J Coman 98, EC O’Dea 98, E Harris 95, N McPhee 96, A McPherson 93, GH Sutherland 93, A Sherwin 84, J McDonald 80, HL Brown 79, T Liston 79, FE Schroeder 79, Mrs Benson 88, Mrs Devitt 75, V McCauley 74.

**President Power Retires From Chair**

After a short discussion regarding the running of tickets for the election of Executive officers, Mr J Power (retiring President) congratulated Mr Willis on his election to the high position of President of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party. He felt quite sure that Mr Willis would, with every credit, do justice to the honour which Labor had conferred on him. He himself had received splendid support from all sections of the Movement, but he wanted to pay a special tribute to Mr Charlie Lloyd on his self-sacrificing work during the past Federal elections. The incoming President would have his assistance, without any reservations whatever (Cheers). It was not only the reunion of the great Trade Union Movement with the ALP that had secured Mr Willis the Presidency. Mr Willis had capacity of his own sufficient to carry him anywhere. Right through this trouble, whatever his personal opinion, he had been ready to carry out just what the Executive directed. Some of his friends had advised him to retire at a certain time, but he believed that had he done so the Labor Party would not have had that magnificently solid Conference. He believed a split would have occurred that would have taken years to heal. “Labor’s troubles are not yet healed”, added Mr Power. “The only place to heal them is in the hearts and minds of the rank and file. Not by carrying resolutions can they be healed.”
**Regarding Rule 33**

Speaking with regard to the future of the Labor Movement, Mr Power urged that the Conference should not disperse without making the meaning of Rule 33 (which states that “the Executive between Conferences has plenary powers to deal with all matters of policy, platform, and rules,” etc.) beyond all doubt. If Labor was to survive it could not allow to remain in jeopardy that keystone upon which it depended – solidarity. (Applause) Let them alter their constitution if necessary, let them have politicians on their Executive if necessary.

But, continued Mr Power, whatever they decided to do, let them determine that their Executive must be obeyed after one Conference till the next Conference. (Hear, hear) The recent occasion had been the first time that the authority of the Executive had been challenged.

Mr Power, continuing, said that he would admit disgraceful things had occurred in the selection ballots, and he had seen officers of their branches defying the ALP. The Labor Movement could be purified and stabilised, and he felt confident that when the next Parliamentary elections took place Labor would sweep the poll. (Applause)

**The New President Speaks**

Amid thunderous applause, the new President (Mr AC Willis) took the chair.

“I have first to thank you for the honour conferred on me by electing me to the highest position in the Labor Movement”, said Mr Willis. “I regard it as higher even than being in Parliament. I know that I have taken extra work, in addition to what I had before. When I entered the Conference, I had no intention of nominating; I had refused. But I saw two factions, organised to gain victory, one over the other. I am not going to traverse the circumstances, but from the time that the squabble commenced I refused to take sides. I have been in consultation with both sides. I told Mr Dooley he would get a fair deal, and nothing more; I told the advocates of Executive control that I would delay my opinion until Conference. I came here. I voted as I concluded I should. I was nominated by neither side, but by my colleagues, the miners. Both sides conveyed this to me, that if I did not fall in with one faction or the other I would fall between the two stools. I would rather have gone out defeated, with not 10 votes, than have won on either ticket.

**Must Stop Fooling**

“I had my experience in 1916”, Mr Willis proceeded. “We carried the day then. We thought we had inaugurated a new era. I think it was a new error. When we got power, it was abused. We came into this Conference
believing that the paramount duty was to re-establish confidence in the Movement throughout the State. I am sure this Conference will break up with a united front; not that you will ever agree here, but because the great working-class Movement demands of the leaders that they shall stop their foolings and fight for the general good.

“We stand absolutely for Executive control. I believe we are absolutely unanimous on that point. The issue we have fought was not one of Executive control. Conditions had sprung up that made the Movement a hotbed of corruption. Unfortunately, some of the best Labor men and women in the country appear to stand defeated. While I hold that the Executive’s action was tyrannical and unjust, I do not say that the whole of the Executive was tyrannical and unjust. My friends who are members of Parliament must not take this vote as a victory for themselves. It was not a vote of approval of their past actions.

**Domination by Uncouth Crooks**

“Referring to ‘uncouth crooks’, preceded by the word ‘dominated,’ it has come to be considered as applying to most of the Executive. I do not believe that Mr Dooley intended it to apply in that way; but if Mr Dooley did intend it he must make his position clear. I know Mrs Dwyer, Miss Golding, Mrs Seery, and the other ladies here, and I would be the last in the world to apply the term to them. But while we deplore this, I must say that there is sufficient evidence to show that there has been domination by uncouth crooks; there have been things going on of which those good ladies have been in happy ignorance.”

“With all our imperfections, I say that the great Labor Movement can never triumph unless it restores the great ideal of the emancipation of the toiling masses from the thraldom of ages.” (Cheers)

Mr Willis moved a vote of thanks to Mr Power. He had known Mr Power a long time, and nobody could say that in his remarks the speaker had in any way inferred that Mr Power had been associated with “crook” work. They were the best of friends, and it was with no feeling against Mr Power that he had stood against him. Technically, the Executive had issued an instruction, and they were right in having done so. That matter should be dropped. He did not desire to see one section claiming victory over the other, for if so that would come out when the selection ballots were being fought, though he would like selection ballots to be abolished altogether. (Hear, hear)

**What Mr Dooley Meant**

Mr Dooley, who seconded the vote of thanks, said he wanted first to express his deep appreciation to those who had supported his re-admission to the Movement, and to say that he was not bearing any
hostility towards those who had voted against it. He was glad to be back in the Movement. He had always felt that the Labor Movement had been a portion of his life, and he felt that he could never leave the Labor Movement as long as he could be of service to it. (Cheers) He congratulated Mr Willis on his election as President. He had known Mr Willis a long time, and he knew that he had contributed considerably to the solidarity of the great industrial Labor Movement. He wished also to express appreciation of the work Mr Power had rendered to the Movement. Though he had differed at times, he had always received courtesy from Mr Power.

“When I stated in an article to the press that I considered the Executive was dominated by uncouth crooks,” continued Mr Dooley. “I said ‘dominated’, and I meant ‘dominated’, and I didn’t mean anything else. I never called Mrs Dwyer or Mrs Seery, or anyone else by that term. I have nothing to withdraw or apologise for, as I did not say the Executive were uncouth crooks. I said they were dominated by certain influences. These influences must cease, or the Movement cannot live, and I would not desire it to live. I do not know how long I will be leader of the Party, nor how long in Parliament; but my hope while I am in these positions is to do something for the great working class.”

(Applause)

Mr Magrath briefly responded, and the motion of thanks was carried on the voices.

Order of Business

Mr Magrath, as chairman of the agenda committee, presented a further report, and moved that the following should be the order of business after the Executive and minority reports had been completed: (1) Federal officers’ report. (2) That the objective of the ALP be the socialisation of industry, exchange, production, and distribution; and that they adopt the Brisbane policy as a mean to carry out the objective. (3) Affiliation (Industrial Conference proposal). (4) Executive control (Rule 33: That the Executive between Conference shall have plenary control). (5) Election of ALP Executive by the group system (Industrial Conference proposal). (6) Election of the Parliamentary leader by Conference for the ensuing 12 months (Camperdown Branch). (7) That the ruling by which members of the Legislature are enabled to nominate for positions on the Executive be annulled.

Several amendments were moved, but lost, and the report was adopted.
Immigration

Mr Wignall, a member of the British Labour Party, and also a member of the Overseas Immigration Delegation now in Australia, was invited to address the Conference. After a few preliminary remarks regarding Labor’s position in Great Britain, he said that the Labour Party had wanted to know what was becoming of the migrants who left Britain for Australia. He had come with the delegation to inquire into the question from the point of view of the British Labour Party. The policy of the delegation was land settlement, and that alone. It has nothing to do with sending tradesmen or workers of any description. The British Labour Party was opposed to sending the workers to Australia simply to take the jobs from Australian workers. (Cheers) He had come to get first-hand information, and if the Conference arrived at any decisions he would be glad to hear of them, so that he could take them to the right quarter.

Mr MA Davidson, MLA, (Broken Hill), suggested that a committee of three be appointed to lay before Mr Wignall all information regarding the “Nationalist” Government’s land policy, and to inform him that the Government was resuming land at valuations in excess of their true value, and that they had repudiated an agreement to give the incapacitated miners of Broken Hill a chance to go on the land. Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers) said they should thank Mr Wignall for having told them that two British officers had said they would like to shift all the unemployed in Britain out to Australia. He said they should also thank him for stating that the British Labour Party would not be a party to such a scheme. Mr Bell (Albury) drew attention to the fact that thousands of young men in Australia wanted to get on the land, but that there was no land for them.

Federal Intervention

Mr A Blakeley, MHR (AWU), having secured the suspension of the standing orders, moved: “That the intervention of the Federal Executive of the ALP in the recent dispute is hereby endorsed; further, that this Conference places on record its appreciation of the Federal Executive’s great assistance in placing the New South Wales Branch on a proper basis”.

Mr R Sumner (Federal President) said that on broad grounds of commonsense he had ruled that the Federal Executive could intervene in the dispute, because intervention was in the interests of the great Labor Movement. He thought the Federal Executive should have plenary power, and he considered a meeting of the ALP Executive just as important as a Cabinet meeting. He deplored the fact that during the recent intervention full reports of the proceedings had appeared in the press. He could say that, as far as the other States were concerned, he did
not know of such a happening of important private business having been divulged to the press by members of the Movement. Referring to the recent Queensland election, he stated that the reason they had won was the fact that they were united, and not because of any particular statesman.

Mr J Hannan (Federal Vice-President) said that the Federal Executive had come in response to invitations from all parts of the State. The decision under Rule 5, sub-clause (e), was that the Federal Executive had power to intervene. Further, it had been necessary to issue an ultimatum to the Executive to the effect that if the State Executive would not negotiate, then the Federal Executive would call the Conference, and reinstate those branches that had been called bogus. Regarding Mr Dooley, the Federal Executive had given no decision, but had said he must be tried by a properly constituted Conference. Mr McGirr had been appointed leader by the State Executive, but the Federal Executive had deposed Mr McGirr. It stated that, until Conference met, and Mr Dooley had been duly tried, Mr Dunn would continue as deputy-leader of the Party. That was one result of its intervention. Another was that every branch that had been declared bogus was placed on the pre-dispute basis.

The Federal Executive had never before intervened in any State, as they had on this occasion. He hoped and trusted that they would never have to intervene again, but if such an occasion ever arose again in the Labor Movement he hoped that they would have men and women upon their Federal Executive with sufficient courage to intervene in a dispute if, like this dispute, it was disrupting the Labor Movement in this State, and was likely to disrupt it right throughout the Commonwealth. (Hear, hear) The approval of that great Conference was all the endorsement the Federal Executive required of their actions. (Applause)

Miss Golding (Annandale) contended that the Federal Executive had no right to intervene unless asked to do so by the State Executive. It had not been asked to intervene, and its intrusion had caused all manner of bitterness. She charged the Federal body with having shown a lack of courtesy to the State Executive. Had it shown more courtesy a better understanding might have been arrived at between the two bodies. She objected to Mr Hannan coming to the Conference and speaking in the manner he did. She moved: “That in future no Federal Executive shall interfere unless invited to do so by the Executive of the State in which it is asked to intervene”.

Conference adjourned till Saturday afternoon.
Day 7, Saturday, 9 June 1923

Immigration and Land Settlement

When Conference resumed on Saturday afternoon (June 9) Mr MA Davidson, MLA, secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved a motion to appoint a committee for the purpose of supplying Mr Wignall, Labor representative of the British Overseas Settlement scheme, with information in relation to defects in the ‘Nationalist’ land policy and particulars regarding land available and the nature thereof. Mr Davidson detailed the nature of the information he considered should be supplied so that Mr Wignall could inform the British Labor Party what the true position was.

Mr Bell (Albury), in seconding the motion, said that the immigration scheme engineered by the ‘Nationalist’ Government was a fraud, as far as the workers were concerned, and could only benefit large landowners. Because of resumptions to be made, an enhanced value was being given to land. The immigrants being put on the land were bankrupt the day they started, and must fail and go to swell the labor market.

The motion was carried. Messrs Loughlin, Dunn, Davidson, Bell, Baddeley, Holloway, Bodkin, Treflé, Garden, and Voigt were appointed member of the committee.

The debate on the question of Federal intervention was resumed. Mr T Bartle (AWU) said he wished to ask Mr Hannan (Federal Vice-President) if he was interviewed in Melbourne by Mr Dan Green, who put the case for the New South Wales politicians before him.

Mr Hannan: The Federal Executive was called together five weeks prior to the originally intended date, with the one object of intervening, and the decision to intervene was unanimous. Mr Dan Green had not been in Melbourne for some weeks before the Executive met, and he did not at any time interview me as suggested.

The President (Mr Willis), in answer to a question by Mrs Dwyer, said that while they all believed in Executive control, the Federal Executive was the supreme controlling body of the Labor Movement. (Loud cheers)

The amendment was defeated, and the motion, moved by Mr Blakeley, was carried.

The Last Elections

The next business was a debate on the remainder of the Executive and Minority reports. Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, submitted that the Parliamentary Labor Party’s report was not a correct report of the doings of the Parliamentary Party. There was nothing to show what were the actual activities of the Party. He claimed that the last election was lost
through the bungling of the head of the Party. ("No! It was McGirr.") He said that prior to the last election he pointed out that the rolls were overloaded, and that to go to the elections was providing opportunities to the 'Nationalists', with wealth at their disposal, to go round and bring in "crooks" to vote. He was satisfied, after seeing police reports, that this had been done. He claimed that the first vote cast in the Balmain contest was cast in the name of a man who had been in New Zealand for years. When Parliament met after the elections he asked for a committee to investigate the matter, but he could not get it. He asked for the votes to be examined, but was told that this could only be done by a vote on the floor of the House, and Labor, being in a minority, could not get this.

Mr Dunn, MLA, referred to a charge made by the previous speaker that members of the Labor Party had voted against preference to unionists in connection with the handling of wheat. He said that before the Wheat Handling Bill went before the House a deputation from the Waterside Workers' Union waited on him, as Minister for Agriculture, and asked for preference to unionists. He pointed out that he could not include it in the Bill, as it was a matter of administration, and, further, if it was included in the Bill, it would court defeat in the Upper House. The deputation admitted that in the previous year they had been given preference, and he gave them an assurance that they would get preference again. The matter was explained in Caucus, which was satisfied. He did not think that, under the circumstance, it was fair to charge men with having voted against preference to unionists. No Labor member or Minister had ever voted against preference. He was also one who did not favour holding the elections at the date decided, but a majority of the Party thought otherwise. They were in the midst of a crisis due to Levy's retirement from the chair, and the majority of members thought it was a good time to go to the country. They did so, and everybody put up the best fight possible. They would have done better if they had been more united and if Mr McGirr had not made some of the statements he did. He, personally, had to contradict many of the statements made by Mr McGirr.

The motion was carried on the voices.

**Labor's Objective Endorsed**

Mr A Blakeley, MHR, moved: "That the objective of the Australian Labor Party, decided at the Brisbane Interstate Conference – socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange – be endorsed by the State Labor Party". He said it was a shameful thing that this objective had not been adopted at the last Conference. It was up to Conference to right that wrong now.

Mr Baddeley, MLA, seconded the motion. Mr Denford (Ironworkers) pointed out that it was intended that the recommendations of the Trade
Union Conference of April 28 should be considered while the objective was being discussed. Mr Garden explained that there was no difference between the recommendations of the TU Conference and the question now before Conference.

The motion was carried by more than the necessary two-thirds majority. Over 100 delegates were present.

**Admission of Communists**

Mr Garden moved the recommendation of the Trade Union Conference, held at Sydney on April 28, regarding affiliations with the ALP, which read as follows:

“2. For the purpose of bringing about a united working-class front, this Conference recommends to the NSW State Conference of the Australian Labor Party the alteration of the Rules and the Constitution to allow of affiliation of other working-class parties, with the right of propaganda and organisation, while at the same time requiring a loyal acceptance of the decisions of representative Conferences.

“Alteration of Rules recommended by sub-committee to accommodate the foregoing proposal:

“2. (a) Rule 2, par. 1 - That the Party shall be open to membership from all persons over the age of 16 years and all Labor organisations who subscribe to the objective, platform, and constitution of the Party and conform thereto.

“2. (b) Rule 6, par. (b) - Insert after ‘political body,’ line 7, ‘not affiliated to the ALP’.

“2. (c) In order to give effect to the wider membership basis proposed in No. 2 recommendation the term ‘Trade Union’ should be extended where necessary in the rules to include all Labor organisations”.

**Working-Class Unity**

Mr Garden said that the 1921 All-Australia TU Congress had decided that the time had come for working-class unity. They could not bring about that unity in a moment, and what was now being done was the effect of what had been decided in 1921. He explained the various alterations of rules proposed in the motion. Regarding the question of freedom of discussion within the Movement, it had always been allowed to give free expression of opinions in the Leagues, and if approved, to get them to Conference where, if they were carried, they became part of the policy of the Movement. He contended that the result of the Queensland elections was largely due to the militants lining up with Labor on a united front policy. If the Conference agreed to the motion, what happened in Queensland would happen in the Commonwealth and other
State elections in the near future. The Movement wanted a vigorous lead, and if that were given nothing could stop the onward march of Labor.

Mr Denford seconded the motion. If it was carried it would mean affiliation of the Communists with the Labor Party. The time had come for a united front of the workers. Everywhere where the workers were not united they were being driven back into defeat. Prominent members of the Communist Party were now on the Executive (not as Communists, but as Labor members), and the logical thing to do was to allow affiliation of the Communist Party to the ALP. If admitted, the Communists would carry on propaganda as part of the Labor Party.

Mr Magrath said that at best they could not do more than affirm the principle of admission and refer it to the incoming Executive, which would then place it before the branches and leagues for consideration, to be finally decided at the next Conference. Mr Garden said that was so. They were only asking for an affirmation of the principle.

**Past Tactics of Communists**

Mr Blakeley opposed the motion. The Communists who formerly stood out and criticised Labor had come to Conference, and members had been elected to responsible positions in the Movement. It was now quite fair to ask them to come right into the Movement, and stand loyally side by side with other Laborites. It was impossible for the Communists to do that as at present organised. They could not continue to function as a part of the Labor Movement and at the same time as a Communist Party. In recent issues of *The Communist* the Labor Party and members of the Party had been bitterly criticised. The Communists could not continue that kind of business if they came into the Labor Party.

The ALP was ready for a fighting policy. But the Communists, if they came in, would have to help to make it a solid Party, not white-ant it. The ALP was wide enough for the most extreme Communist, but there was an obligation that they must be prepared to vote Labor, fight for Labor, and stand loyally by Labor’s decisions. Suppose *The Communist* continued to issue matter contrary to that appearing in *The Worker* and the *Labor News*. Think of the confusion that would take place. There could be only one party, and one party alone. The Communists could not be allowed to join Labor and then go out and attack Laborites. Picture a Labor candidate on the platform, enunciating Labor views, and a Communist getting up and telling the audience: “Don’t let this chap get it. He might do some dark and dastardly deed against the workers if he is elected.” Labor could not stand for anything like that.

Mr Sheiles (Clerical Association) claimed that Mr Blakeley was wanting to take away the right to criticise. If it was wrong for the Communists to criticise Labor, it was wrong for *The Worker* to take sides against the Executive, as had been done during the past few weeks. He
believed in the right of every individual to criticise anybody in the Movement. It was in the interests of the Movement to bring about the amalgamation with the Communists. In his opinion, politicians and aspiring politicians needed criticism. He did not see there should be any conflict with the Communists on the question of the Objective.

**Will it Affect Country Vote?**

Mr Loughlin, MLA, opposed the motion. Mr Theodore’s victory was not due to any help from the Communists. In the Queensland metropolitan seats where the industrialists predominated and where the Communists had assisted Labor candidates Labor had lost 5000 votes. But in the country electorates where there were no Communists to help Labor an increase of 17,000 votes had been polled. The fusion with the Communists would not make for solidarity, but would split the Movement to fragments. It would lead to the formation of a Country Labor Party, and then there would follow the disillusionment of the Labor Party as it was at the present time. That would be an end to solidarity. He quoted figures to show how the amalgamation with the Communists would do great harm to Labor. The country vote would be alienated if the Communist party were allowed to join with Labor. He referred to discreditable literature that a certain gentleman was able to get into The Communist that other papers would not print. Regarding the election of Communists to the Executive, if they were there as Communists it was illegal under Rule 52. They could only be there as delegates from Labor leagues and unions, not as delegates from the Communist party.

**“Time-Serving Politicians”**

Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers) said that according to some speakers they were not to talk about working-class matters in some quarters. The interests of the working class had too long been prostituted to serve the interests of time-serving politicians. Some of the arguments put up by previous speakers were absolutely discreditable to them. The goal of the workers had to be clear, the objective must not be clouded. Politicians had prostituted themselves in the past, and their offences had been condoned by the rank and file. They were not against the politicians, they were against the abuse of their positions in Parliament. Many politicians went into Parliament to serve themselves, not the workers. He remembered that politicians who now applauded Brookfield’s memory were prepared to crucify him when he said “The Red Flag is the only flag for me”. Why was it that the workers – 85 per cent of the population – were not going to the polls? It was because they had lost hope, having watched the politicians betray them time and again. Labor’s policy must
be framed by the workers, who knew what was wanted, and not by the politicians, who were only considering themselves.

Mr HE Connell, MLA, opposed the motion on the ground that it was not practicable. If it could be shown that the proposed arrangement could be made workable he would support it. All members of the ALP were pledged to support the Labor pledge, policy and constitution. If the Communists were pledged to another pledge, policy and constitution they could not join the Labor Party. The objective of the two parties might be the same, but the methods of attaining that objective were different. If they admitted the Communists, what was there to prevent other organisations, claiming to represent the working class, coming along seeking affiliation? The Protestant Labor Federation might come along. They could only have one pledge, policy and constitution, and if the Communists accepted that then they could join the leagues as individual members.

**Straight Talk to Communists**

Mr EJ Stein (Railway Workers) said the whole thing boiled down was that a party sought affiliation on terms that the ALP could not grant them. If the Communists joined the ALP they were traitors to their own organisation. And if they joined the ALP while still adhering to their own party’s constitution then they were traitors to the ALP. They could only come into the ALP provided they were loyal to Labor. If they did not agree to that they could not be admitted. Communists who demanded to be allowed to come into the Labor Party on their own terms had their tongues in their cheeks when they spoke of solidarity. How could they be loyal to Labor and still be loyal to the Communist Party? They must be traitors one way or the other. He was amazed that such a ‘stunt’ should be attempted by the Communists who claimed to stand for square-dealing.

Mr Heffron (Marine Stewards) claimed that the Conference could not refuse to admit the Communists to the Labor Party. The only difference was that of tactics. The objective of many of the unions already affiliated to Labor was not socialisation. Then how could they object to the Communists whose objective was socialisation? He claimed that the Labor Movement was never split by the militants, but by ‘Nationalists’ parading as Laborites. If they wanted a united front they could not allow reactionary politicians to stand in the way of the entry of the militants.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, also supported the affiliation of the Communists. He claimed they could win more seats for Labor if the Communists were in the Party fighting side by side with Labor men.

When the debate was resumed on Saturday night Mr Nulty (Leeton) supported the motion. It was necessary to have men like the Communists in the Party. What they wanted was men of the type of the late Percy
Brookfield. Mr Theodore had won out in Queensland because he had a militant policy.

**A Close Division**

Mr Knight also supported the motion, which pledged all members, whether Labor or Communist, to accept the decisions of Conference and stand loyally by them.

Mr Walker (Belmore) said the Communists did not believe in political action. If they now said they did then they were sinking one of their vital planks. Did anyone believe that they would do this, for if they did they ceased to be a Communist party? He had never seen any Communist doing the rough work at election time. They were always missing then. If they wanted to come into the Labor Movement they should do so as individuals signing the Labor pledge.

After Mr Garden had replied, a vote was taken. On division the voting was equal – 122 on each side.

The President (Mr Willis) said it rested with him, as chairman, to give the casting vote. He did so in favour of the motion. A scene of tremendous excitement followed. There was loud cheering for several minutes and delegates sang “The Red Flag”.

**Astounding Accusations. “Crook” Votes, Sliding Panels, Faked Badges**

At this stage the President (Mr AC Willis) said that he desired to bring forward a matter on which to receive instruction. The committee of inquiry into the matter of the ballot boxes had reached a stage when they considered an interim report should be submitted. They found that there were matters so intricate in the question that it would be impossible to complete the inquiry in time for such Conference. One witness had given such extraordinary and sensational evidence before the committee that afternoon that he had been asked to repeat it to Conference.

**Mr T Smith’s Statement**

The President then called upon Mr TJ Smith, MLC, who said: “I made a statement this afternoon before the committee appointed by Conference. I deemed it advisable to make the statement to them rather than to the Conference, and, under their instructions, I make the statement here, substantiated by fact. I want to take the Conference’s mind back to December 1919, when a selection ballot was to be taken for the new electorate of Sydney, and I now proceed to read a letter, addressed by myself to a barrister, seeking his advice regarding my actions:
(Strictly Private and Confidential)

Stanley-Street, City,
January 6, 1920
Robt. Sproule, Esq.,
Legal Aid Department

Dear Sir,

“I am very much troubled in mind over a position that has developed in the Sydney selection ballot, and I am anxious to obtain your opinion as to whether I am doing the right thing under the extraordinary circumstances.

“About a fortnight ago Mr Bartle, of the AWU, sent an urgent message, asking me to call at the AWU office.

(“I may point out that Mr Bartle was only an employee”, interpolated Mr Smith.)

“I called, and he proceeded to state that the AWU (Messrs Lambert and Bailey) intended running the following ticket at the selection: Messrs Bramston, Farrell, Sutherland, Buckley, and Smith. I argued the position with him, pointing out that certain names mentioned I could not support, and, further, I desired a free hand, because I did not think it fair to the other sitting members. I asked why were the AWU coming into the matter, and what did they intend doing. He pointed out that they wanted to crush Ald Burke, on account of his action in the Goulburn electorate and the City Council caucus, and, further, they wanted to help Sutherland and Farrell and Bramston, as a return for services rendered.

“They intended to poll 1000 ‘crook’ AWU votes.

“Each of the five men was to obtain 20 men; these men would visit every polling booth, recording a vote at ten booths, making a total of ten votes each.

“I listened, and said a few words, finally promising to consider the matter. I got away. I wanted to think of how I could checkmate it. At first I felt sick and disgusted. What a damnable proposal! I wanted to tell them plainly that I would wash my hands of their dirty business. Then I slept on the proposal, and finally decided to hang on for a while to get all the information.”

Mr Smith here interrupted his reading to remark: “At this stage I took counsel with friends who are in the hall tonight. They were: Dr F Wall, of Burwood; Mr Roger Harrison, of East Sydney; and Mr Robert Sproule, of the Legal Aid Department.”

**Sliding Panels**

Proceeding, Mr Smith read as follows:

“A meeting was arranged for Monday the 5th, at 11 am at the AWU office. Farrell, Bramston, Buckley, Sutherland, Bailey, and myself attended. A general discussion took place covering pretty well the same ground.
“We adjourned until this morning (6/1/19) at 10 am. Mr Sutherland was to arrange to obtain the telephonist’s room, because it was considered dangerous for us to meet at the AWU office.

“I arrived late at this morning’s meeting. Messrs Farrell, Bramston, Sutherland, and Buckley were present. Previous to my arrival they had been discussing the altered position that had arisen owing to the news leaking out that the AWU intended polling 1000 crook votes, and they had mutually agreed to have an AWU postal vote of 100 polled for the ticket, and seek other means of getting ‘crook’ votes.

“I have been terribly worried over this business as to whether I was doing right. I know if I got a fair go my selection is assured. To think of men in cold blood setting out to politically murder such men as Mr J Birt, MLA, and using me as a tool, makes my blood boil. I want a fair deal for myself and every other man contesting the selection. But to come back to the meeting.

“Mr Bramston had a proposal. He suggested that ‘crook’ ballot boxes be made with a sliding panel, that the centre panel be made in such a way that it would be possible to tamper with it.

“His scheme was ingenious. Only two boxes were made, and these were to be placed in booths where the returning officers were favourable to us. Then the whole of the boxes were to be brought into Macdonell House.

“After the poll had closed at 9 o’clock it was to be arranged that the returning officer, Mr Bowden, should insist on counting one box at a time, and at 11 o’clock would instruct the scrutineers to sign and seal the boxes and then have them placed under lock and key.

“Arrangements would be made for Mr Tom Arthur and some others to come in on Sunday morning. They, having the keys to the strong-room, would open the ‘crook’ boxes, take out the ballot papers and place others in their stead.

“Though lengthy, this is but a summary of what occurred. This latter scheme is, to my mind, dastardly, and, in the interests of the Labor Movement that I have the honour to represent in Parliament, not to mention by own reputation. I feel it is my duty to associate with these men and their schemes so that I can obtain the fullest information for the purpose of frustrating this infamy at a later stage. Ever since Mr Bramston mentioned this scheme I have been worried and troubled in mind as to how I stand legally in my action. I ask you to inform me exactly how I stand in this matter from a legal point of view.

Yours faithfully, “TJ Smith”

Mr Sproule’s Reply

Mr Sproule, said Mr Smith, replied as follows:

“Legal Aid Office, Chancery Square, Sydney, January 3, 1920

“Dear Mr Smith, - In reply to your letter of the 6th instant, I beg to inform you that the parties mentioned could probably be put on their trial for conspiracy. The offence is complete already in each instance – it was so, as
soon as the agreement was arrived at. You have secured yourself against the possibility of such a charge being preferred against yourself by avoiding agreement in proposals injurious to the public. Continued association with these men, with the object of obtaining information to frustrate the scheme cannot be construed as agreement on your part, but the object of such continued association should be, not with the sole object of frustrating the conspiracy, but with the object of obtaining information to give in evidence at a possible trial.

“Your letter is returned herewith, - Yours faithfully (Sgd) R Sproule, Barrister-at-law

“(T J Smith, Esq, MLA, Parliament House, Sydney)”

Plotters Forestalled

Having read the letters, Mr Smith then said: “I intimated the position to friends whom I asked to interview the candidates with a view to raising a storm. Subsequent meetings were held, but every proposal made by the plotters was indirectly prevented from being carried out. There was one weak point in my case - the ballot boxes could not be obtained. The scheme was not gone on with, however. At one meeting this was decided.

“As the faked boxes could not be used owing to the scare, it was decided that faked AWU tickets should be used, and they were used. I took a parcel of AWU votes and gave them to my friends. They were used against the ticket intended.

“People may remember that a certain meeting in the Protestant Hall was broken up by my friends. I might be asked why I waited for over three years to make these revelations. I had not the boxes, nor the evidence. The boxes were not in my possession. They never were used to my knowledge.

“The scrutineers in the 1920 ballot may remember that they got instructions to stick to the ballot box till it got to Macdonell House, and to stay three until the votes were all counted.

Domination of the Executive

“The Executive which just went out, and that which preceded it, had always been dominated by one man - John Bailey. I was afraid of my Committee before whom I might have brought this. I cast no reflection upon Mrs Seery, Mrs Dwyer, Mr Hutchinson, and others on the Executive that has just gone out, or on that which preceded it.

“Yesterday a new Executive came into existence. Today, I get my first opportunity. I went to the Committee, and it is the Committee that brought me down here. This is the first opportunity that I have had in over three years.
“Many of you have wanted to know why I had to go into the Supreme Court to get an injunction against a scoundrel printing damaging circulars in my name”, declaimed the speaker, excitedly. “Many of you want to know about matter distributed outside St Mary’s Church. Perhaps you understand now. The discovery about the making of boxes with sliding panels had taken place, and the man who was to make them was a fellow named Cummings.”

Voices: “Who was to give the order?”
Mr Smith: “I think — ”
Mrs Seery: “It’s no good telling us what you think.”
Mr Smith: “Mrs Seery’s friend, Mr Buckley.” (Uproar)

**President Willis Gives Interim Report**

When Mr Smith resumed his seat, President Willis gave an interim report on behalf of the Investigation Committee. He said: “I desire to submit an interim report from the Investigation Committee appointed by this Conference. The Committee has found exceptional difficulty in making their investigations, because everybody who should know all about the ballot boxes knows nothing. In the few days we have spent upon the business, we have gone farther than our predecessors got in the months at their disposal. We have plenty of evidence to bring before any court.

“There were at least a dozen boxes made with sliding panels”, Mr Willis continued. “They were obtained from, though not actually made by, a man named Cummings. We have met the men who made them. Cummings was foreman on a job at a place known to us. One day he asked a carpenter how a box could be made from which papers could be extracted without interfering with the lock. After showing how it could be done, the man asked Cummings what he wanted such boxes for. Cummings replied: “Buckley isn’t too sure of being selected this time. If he is selected he has a chance to be Minister for Railways. Then I’ll get a good job, and I’ll look after you.”

**Taking the Boxes to Macdonell House**

“The boxes were taken away by a carter, whose name we have. He tells us they were delivered at Macdonell House to Cummings, who was waiting there for them. Mr Carey and Mr Gibbs have no knowledge of the delivery, while Mr Tom Arthur says they were delivered inside Macdonell House, and he found them there. I do not say that the boxes were used fraudulently – but the indications are that they were – in the Sydney selection ballots. We have found each box examined to be ‘crook’. (Uproar)

“We asked Mr Carey,” continued Mr Willis “to produce the box used in connection with the last selection of officers at Conference. Knowing
exactly how to examine it, we found the panel right away. Here is the box, and there is the slide.”

Executive Ballot Box Produced

At this juncture Mr Willis placed the Executive ballot box on the table, tilted it, tapped the middle panel, which slid out of its place. (Sensation)

“We have no reason to believe it was corruptly used on the last occasion”, continued Mr Willis. “Had it been handed to me then I would never have known it was ‘crook’.

“The plan was most carefully thought out. One of the makers said a dab of glue was placed at the corners of the loose boards. After the balloting, the boxes were to be nailed up. In this slide a nail has to be struck through each end, after the box has been used. In each corner the dummy nail-head has been left.

“This is the box that Mrs Dwyer suggested might be used for the ballot this year. I am sure she is the most surprised person in the room. I repeat that had I been handed the box before I knew of the suspicion I never would have thought it ‘crook’.”

Cheques to be Scrutinised

Mr Willis said that the boxes had been paid for with two cheques. The first was for £10 and the second – paid through Mr Buckley – for £3/10/-.

It was not known who had received the first money. Mr Carey told the Investigation Committee, appointed by the last Executive that the receipts had been handed to the committee appointed by the last Executive. Mr Rowlands had said they were not. Mr Carey had given an authorisation to the speaker to get the two cheques from the Commonwealth Bank, and it was expected that by this means, in the absence of the receipts, it would be discovered today who got the money.

The account sent in by Cummings presented a peculiar feature. He did not send in a bill for the boxes, but for the timber and material used in them, including the nails.

If this was caution, it had a peculiar sequel. The first man who admitted making the boxes, with the assistance of another, had tried to shuffle, giving the investigators the impression that somebody else had seen him, and that had he not previously made a statement they would have got nothing out of him. This man said that not steel, but brass hinges had been used in the boxes made by them. In Cummings’s inventory, steel butts appeared.
Purging the Labor Movement

“We are quite conscious of the fact”, continued the President, “that attempting to prove these matters will make those who are already enemies, very much more bitter enemies, but I consider that the great Labor Movement cannot take that into consideration. Also, there are a number of persons who are at present under a cloud, and the matter must be gone on with. We say that the Committee should be allowed to continue its investigations even if it is necessary to take legal action. The good name of Labor should not be tarnished by statements that stink in the nostrils. The Movement must be purged of the rubbish that is in it.”
(Cheers)

Special Conference Suggested

Mr Howie (a member of the Investigating Committee) said that Conference should seriously consider when adjourning whether it should not re-assemble in three months so as to consider the full report from the Committee. If the matter was allowed to go for another twelve months they would never get at the bottom of it. If a Special Conference were called, the question of altering the rules of the Party could also come up for consideration.

Charges Denied

Mr T Bartle asked Mr Smith: Was I at any meeting of the candidates for Sydney when the sliding panels were mentioned?

Mr T Smith: No; I have already explained that you were only an employee in Mr Bailey’s office at that time.

Mr Bartle: I wish Conference to go straight on. I don’t want this hanging over my head indefinitely. I feel I am under suspicion, and I will not act as a delegate until it has been cleaned up. I will give you every assistance possible.

Mr G Sutherland is Astounded

Mr Gavin Sutherland said: “To say that I was astounded when I heard Mr Smith state I was present at a meeting when a suggestion for ‘crook’ ballots or tickets was made would be to put it mildly. I was a candidate for the Sydney selection and linked up in a ticket with Farrell, Brown, Smith and Buckley, but was not with them long when I thought that they were putting it over me. Outside the place that I live, I hardly got a vote. I think I got 300, and Mr Smith got 1400. Mr Smith was on the 1921 Executive, and a Vice-President. On that occasion I believe Mr Catts’s followers predominated in the Executive.”
“I think this matter should not be left to the Executive, but dealt with by Conference, and I will not act as a delegate any longer until my name is cleared.”

Mr Smith: “Here is a man (Mr Harrison) who saw Mr Sutherland at a meeting of the lot I have named”.

Mr Sutherland: “I did not deny that I was present at a meeting. I have already said we were running in a group for selection.”

“At a Loss for Words”

Mr Bramston said: “I am at a loss for words. That Mr Smith should come here and state such outrageous lies as it is false. As regards the ballot box, it is false. We only decided at our meetings to run in groups and to take steps to advance our candidature. We never discussed other matters. It is a wonder that Mr Smith did not protest then, or come before Conference, if what he says is true. We were only among ourselves devising little matters of organisation. (Laughter) So far as ‘crook’ ballot boxes or AWU tickets are concerned, I can only say we are totally innocent, and I hope the Committee will give us the opportunity of going before them.”

Another Bombshell

Mr Jack White (AWU Organiser) said: “For a considerable time I have not been satisfied with what was going on in the Labor Movement. I have suffered because I refused to be the tool of any man in the Movement. I have information I believe that will be the means of putting out one of the ‘uncouth crooks’ Mr Dooley referred to. I refer to John Bailey, who, to some extent, had been my boss for the last eight years. I would have brought this matter before the last Conference only Bailey had the numbers on his side, and I would not bring it to a packed Conference. Some time ago I was supposed to vote how a certain man wanted me to, and because I refused I suffered in the industrial Movement, and was sent out into the backblocks to do organising work. Had I been a pliant tool I could have had a good job. I want to clear the name of the AWU from any stigma, that is why I am fighting. At the last Conference, 12 months ago, Mr Bailey came to me on the floor of Macdonell House, handed me some badges, and asked me to get a couple of reliable people and bring them into the hall. They were faked badges. I waited until I saw a man whose name was on one of the forgeries, and who is in the Conference tonight, and he can produce the original badge.”

Continuing, Mr White said that badge No.164 was issued to him in accordance with the rules. A day or two after Mr Bailey handed him badge No.345, which was also in his name. Mr J Atkins was issued badge
No.161, and he (Mr White) had the duplicate badge, No.346, given him by Mr Bailey, which was in Mr Atkin’s name. He called upon a delegate to produce the original badge given him last year, of which he (Mr White) had a duplicate, and Mr Atkins produced a badge.

“I have other evidence,” concluded Mr White. “I could have got more if I had consented to be the tool of Mr Bailey. I hope this Conference will place Mr Bailey in his right place, which is outside the Movement. If delegates do that they will be doing a thing that members of the AWU will appreciate”.

**Charge Supplemented**

Mr Atkins said it was on the corresponding Saturday of last year’s Conference that they had received the badges from Mr Bailey at Macdonell House. They were asked to get reliable men and pack the meeting against the Brisbane objective. He did not bring any men. He was issued two badges – one in the name of JM Field, an AWU Organiser, who was not present, and the other in the name of G Clark, who was acting already at the last Conference. Like Mr White, he had been afraid to place his word against that of Mr J Bailey, MLA, President of the Central Branch, and Vice-President for the Commonwealth of the AWU. He had left one badge safely at Katoomba, while he gave another to a man at Cootamundra. He had found that working under Mr Bailey he had either to sacrifice pay or principle. He had sacrificed pay, and had gone back to work at navvying. (Cheers)

**Mr Bailey Replies**

Mr Bailey then made the following statement to Conference:

“Dealing first with Mr Smith’s statement that I took a part in tickets for the Sydney selection ballot, that ballot was nothing to me. I was not interested in it in any shape or form. Why should I interfere? I say now that I never discussed the matter with Smith, Sutherland, Bramston, nor any of the candidates.

“Dealing with White, I don’t direct White. He is not under my care. I challenge any AWU man to prove that I have ever approached him or tried to coerce him into voting against his will. If so, let us know the division, or when the vote was.

“Regarding the badges, I am not in charge of them. Any delegate may say to me, ‘I’ll not be there to-night; give my badge to so-and-so, or so-and-so’.

“I invite the strictest investigation. White is not in my charge nor in my care. We hold annual meetings of the AWU. We have just recently held a meeting of the Federal Council. Mr White has never reported there.

“Mr Smith has been on the industrial section of Conference, which met and decided how it would vote. How could I dominate the Executive? It is only
a couple of years ago that Mr Catts said he had a majority upon the Executive.

“The tickets are in charge of one man, and one man alone. That man is responsible to the Secretary and the auditors. Not one ticket that cannot be traced has been issued from The Worker office for the AWU in the last ten years”.

Mr Tom Arthur also made a denial of statements made by Mr Smith, in which his name was used. He said he knew nothing about the ballot-box matter until it was reported to the Central Executive.

**Removing the Stigma from Labor**

Mr A Blakeley, MHR, said that the earlier statements made to Conference were bad enough. “The information now before Conference is damning, and requires urgent attention”, he added “I therefore move: ‘That the Committee be authorised to go ahead with its investigations, and report as soon as possible; that Conference authorise the Executive to take all the necessary steps – legal or other – to remove the stigma from Labor; and that the charges made in connection with the AWU be reported to Mr E Grayndler, with a request that the matter be dealt with immediately by that body.’

“The matter that has come up tonight cannot be dealt with in a day or two. It cannot be done for this Conference. But we cannot wait for three months. We have a clean Executive, representative of the Movement. This load must be removed without delay. The Labor Movement cannot afford to carry it any longer.”

Mr Bell (Albury) seconded the motion. While he believed in mercy, where it was possible, where decent people had suffered, justice must be done.

Mr Payne moved, as an amendment, “That the matter be placed in the hands of the Crown law authorities”.

**Mr O'Dea’s Suggestion**

Mr O'Dea (Shop Assistants’ Union) said that when the matter came before the last Executive it was sent along to an investigating committee. That committee did not get anywhere, though it was anxious that the matter should be cleaned up. He suggested at one stage that it should be put into the hands of the police, thinking that if a charge of conspiracy was made against certain persons it would be the means of exposing others. He suggested this course to Mr Bailey, who thought it would be a good thing. He also suggested it to other members of the Executive, and to Mr Carey (General Secretary), who thought that it would be better to leave it to the Conference to deal with.
Mr Barney Mullins said he wished to thank Mr Willis for saying that the fraud had been visible only to those who knew enough to look for it. He had been a scrutineer at the last Conference.

Alderman Michael Burke, ex-MLA, said that he intended to go before the Investigating Committee and give evidence about faked tickets and stuffed ballots that would surprise members of the Committee.

When the question was put to the Conference the amendment was rejected, and the motion moved by Mr Blakeley was carried by an overwhelming majority. The Conference then adjourned till Monday evening (June 11).

**Day 8, Monday, 11 June 1923**

**Explanation by President**

When Conference re-assembled on Monday evening, President Willis said there appeared to be some misunderstanding regarding the vote carried on Saturday evening in reference to the right of working-class bodies to affiliate with the ALP. The motion carried simply reaffirmed the principle of the right of working-class bodies to affiliate with the ALP. It did not alter the present position at all. It must be submitted to the leagues and others in time for them to vote on it at the next Conference. Until a decision was arrived at by the next Conference by a two-thirds majority, the position stood as it was. Conference merely affirmed the principle. At this stage a scene was caused by Mr Alam (Dubbo) jumping to this feet and accusing the Chairman of refusing to give him the call on the previous Saturday. He wanted to speak against the motion dealing with the admission of Communists, but the Chairman had refused to call him. Though ordered to resume his seat, he continued to shout to delegates, addressing them from the centre passage. Chairman Willis again ordered him to resume his seat, adding that if he did not do so he would be ejected from Conference. The delegate defied the Chairman to put him out of the room.

Chairman Willis then left the chair, entered the body of the hall, and caught hold of Mr Alam’s arm. Several other delegates proceeded to assist the Chairman to remove the delegate. Mr Bailey then came on the scene, said something to the delegate and the Chairman, and the delegate was finally persuaded to resume his seat.

After calm had been restored, Mr Alam apologised for his conduct, and explained that he had wanted to speak against the admission of the Communists. He claimed that the Communists’ propaganda was doing great harm to the Labor Movement. They were proving bigger enemies to Labor than the ‘Nationalists’ and Progressives. The name of Garden in
the country was worse than that of either Lenin or Trotsky. The entry of the Communists into the Labor Movement would split the Party.

**Mr Stapleton’s Explanation**

Mr R Stapleton (Paddington) made a personal explanation. He said that following his statement to the last Executive regarding the “crook” ballot boxes, certain members of the Executive said it was a tissue of lies. They also set about on a propaganda that he was a “scab”, that he belonged to a “scab” organisation, and that he associated himself with a “scab” organisation led by Catts. It was true that he attended meetings held by Catts three years ago in the Southern Cross Hall, Sydney. An organisation was formed for propaganda purposes, one of the rules being that all members joining would have to be trade unionists affiliated with the ALP and members of the ALP leagues. He was appointed secretary of the organisation. Afterwards Mr Power spoke to him, and pointed out certain facts about the rules. Subsequently he received a notification from Mr Carey (General Secretary) that the organisation was incompatible with the tenets of Labor. He immediately resigned, and had not been associated with it since.

**Preselection Ballots**

Mr A Moate (Marine Stewards) having secured the suspension of the standing orders moved – “The complete abolition of preselection ballots whilst proportional representation remains the law of the land”. He said that the discussions at earlier sessions of the Conference convinced him that the quickest and cleanest way to purge the Labor Movement of all corruption was to abolish the present method of preselection. If preselection was in vogue at the next election candidates would have to stand up to the harshest criticism ever launched by the capitalist press. They would be asked, “How did you get your selection?” An impression had gone abroad that quite a lot of people had gained selection by other than fair means. Consequently sitting members and those to be selected at next election would be placed in invidious positions. Conference should consider the question of the abolition of the preselection ballots. He did not think that this would mean that sitting members would lose their seats. With the abolition of the preselection ballots, there could be no suggestion of corruption. Then the capitalist press and their political opponents could never point the finger of scorn at them and suggest there was anything wrong with their selection.
Prefers Single Electorates

Mr Alam (Dubbo) seconded the motion. He said that much of the harm that had been done could be traced to the principle of proportional representation. If candidates could not agree amongst themselves as to the order of voting, how could they expect the selectors to agree? Had proportional representation not been introduced there would have been no talk of corruption, nor would they have witnessed one Labor man fighting against another. He did not think that Labor would have been defeated in the old single-seat electorates.

Several delegates sought to move amendments, but they were ruled out of order on the ground that Conference was discussing a principle, and any amendment should be moved as a motion.

Mr D Murray, MLA, (Newcastle), opposed the motion. They had held a selection ballot at Newcastle in which 12,000 members participated. There were ten candidates, and there was not a solitary growl when the selection was completed. If preselection ballots were abolished the sitting member would have a decided pull over a new candidate. All he was concerned about was the cleaning up of the Labor Movement. Mr Jarvie (Ryde) opposed the motion on the ground that it would give the sitting member an advantage over other candidates. Mr Bell (Albury) briefly supported the motion.

Mr Garden (Sailmakers) supported the motion. It had been his experience that candidates defeated at the selection ballot became disgruntled and in some cases attempted to undermine the selected candidates.

Mr Dooley’s Views

Mr Dooley, MLA, said it was the general opinion that they could do without selection ballots altogether. But he asked delegates to imagine 30 Labor candidates running for a seat. Every Laborite would have to vote for the whole thirty, in order to get the full value of the votes. Even then they would not get the full value, while there would be endless confusion, with the result that the Labor candidate’s chance would be weakened. He suggested that they should follow what had been done in Victoria – appoint a committee of investigation to deal thoroughly with the matter.

Mr H O’Connell opposed the motion. If there were a score of candidates running in an election they would be looking after themselves, and not the Movement. Mr Holloway briefly supported the motion. The question was put, the voting being 130 for the motion and 97 against. But as this was not the necessary two-thirds majority the motion was declared lost.
Committee of Inquiry

Mr Seale (Wharf Laborers) moved, and Mr Denford (Ironworkers) seconded, “That a committee of seven be appointed by the Conference to go into the matter of selection ballots, and to report back to Conference the best method of selecting Federal, State, and Municipal candidates for election”. The motion was carried, and Messrs Magrath, Garden, Howie, Murray, Denford, Holloway, and Mrs Fowler were elected to the committee.

Report of Agenda Committee

Mr Magrath, chairman of the Agenda Committee, in making a report to Conference said that matters to be dealt with included the ballot-box report, the appointment of a committee to revise the rules, the proposed reconstruction of the Executive, and the question of Parliamentarians’ right to sit on the Executive. These matters could not possibly be dealt with during the life of the present Conference. It was suggested, in view of such important considerations, that Conference adjourn for a period that would enable these matters to be brought to a stage where they could be submitted to Conference for final decision.

The matter of the leadership of the Parliamentary Party also had to be considered; but Conference had already affirmed the principle of Executive control. Consideration had to be given to Rule 33, regarding which there was some dispute. This rule set out that: “The Executive between Conferences has plenary powers to deal with all matters of Policy, Platform, and Rules, and their decisions must be observed by all members of the Movement, but any member of the ALP shall have the right of appeal to the Conference next following from any Executive edict”. Another matter to be considered was motion 38 on the agenda paper, which said “That the ruling by which members of the Legislative Council are enabled to nominate for positions on the Executive be annulled”. The discussion had not ended when Conference adjourned.

Communists and the Labor Party. Interpretation of the Rules

On Monday evening a delegate asked the President (Mr Willis) to give an interpretation of Rules 6, 52 and 24 regarding members of the ALP who were also members of another party. The matter had a direct bearing on the admission of Communists to the Labor Movement. The President said that Rule 52 set out that “no Labor candidate or member of the ALP shall sign the pledge or undertaking of any other group, organisation or party”. Rule 6 (clause b) laid it down that “any member of an affiliated union who is a known member of any other political body shall not be entitled to the privileges of membership of the Labor Movement”. Rule 24 stated that “delegates to the Annual Conference or any Special
Conference shall not belong to any other political organisation or party, and shall be called upon before taking their seats at Conference to subscribe to the platform and constitution of the ALP”.

Mr Willis said he understood the reasons why the matter was raised at that juncture. Had he been in the chair when the Conference opened, and had he been asked to interpret the rules, he would have had to rule out all men who belonged to other parties. But no objection was taken then. Some delegates had wanted to see how the cat jumped, and it had jumped the wrong way. He understood that the Communists had come into the Labor Movement for the purpose of working inside it. If that was not correct, they had better say so at once. If they were not prepared to confine themselves to the constitution of the ALP then they would be expelled. But he believed that Mr Howie and others had come to Conference for the purpose of working with the ALP and abiding by all the rules.

**Communist Party Must Cease to Exist**

Mr Howie stated that the Communists had not come to the Conference without giving serious consideration to their actions. They would at all times loyally abide by the decision of the Conference. The Communists would not oppose the ALP. Whatever was decided by Conference, that decision they would accept as final. They would conform entirely to the policy of and platform of the ALP.

The President said that was satisfactory to anyone. It meant that the Communists ceased to be a party when they came into the ALP. They could not be members of another party while they were members of the ALP. He ruled that they were entitled to remain in the Labor Movement. A delegate asked how long had Mr Howie and others resigned from the Communist Party. The President replied that whatever party they belonged to when they came into the ALP they pledged themselves to abide by the decisions of the Party and they ceased to be a separate party. The Communist Party had to conform to the ALP constitution, otherwise they could not belong to the Party.

**Day 9, Tuesday, 12 June 1923**

**Important Rulings by President Willis.**

**Labor Attitude towards Immigration**

On Tuesday night Mr AW Buckley gave an emphatic denial to Mr TJ Smith’s sensational statement insofar as it applied to him. A full report of Mr Buckley’s statement will appear in our next issue. When the New South Wales Annual Conference resumed its sittings on Tuesday evening
(June 12), Mr AW Buckley, ex MLA, made a lengthy statement regarding certain allegations in connection with the “crook” ballot boxes and the 1920 Sydney election ballot. He said that as his name had been mentioned in the matter, he desired to make a statement in order to clear his honour, his good name, and his reputation (laughter) which were well known in the Labor Movement. Never would they find him guilty of any act of corruption or any action that he could not at once clear and defend himself against, and those who were supporting him would have no cause for regret.

He stated that he was living at Paddington when he was elected member for Surry Hills. In August 1917, he removed to No 10 Richards Avenue, Surry Hills, where Mr Cummings and another man resided. Cummings remained in the house with him until after the strike had taken place, and he left for Brisbane on the advice of his medical adviser to take his wife away. Those two men then left his place, and went across to live with a Mr Smith. That was the only part he took in the matter.

**The 1920 Selection Ballot**

He was a candidate in 1920 for the Labor selection ballot. Many people knew that he was frequently in the ALP office, where he did Trojan work. He asked how the ballot was getting on, and Mr Carey said that the Executive had decided to have ballot-boxes made. He (Mr Buckley) said that the time was rapidly approaching, and asked when they were going to get busy. On his way home one afternoon he met Mr Cummings, who told him that he would cut out his work in a couple of weeks. He (Mr Buckley) told him that if he required a job he understood there was a small job at the ALP that Mr Carey could give him making ballot-boxes. He did not meet Mr Cummings till some time later, when the ballot was over. Mr Cummings told him that he had made the boxes but that he had not been paid by the ALP. He (Mr Buckley) told Mr Carey, who said that he would make out a cheque. A cheque was made out – he did not know by whom – but it was crossed to him (Mr Buckley), who paid it in to his account, and gave Mr Cummings his own cheque, as he had done on numerous occasions in other matters. If ballot-boxes were made that were faked, he knew nothing about them.

**Charge against Member of Investigating Committee**

He had nothing against Mr Willis, but there was one man on the Committee, Mr JF O’Reilly, who would never give him a fair go, and had publicly stated that he would “get” Buckley at all costs. Mr O’Reilly commenced his objection to him because he failed to have him appointed a Justice of the Peace. He recommended that Mr O’Reilly be made a JP, and he did his best to have the recommendation adopted, but he could
not do so, because Mr O’Reilly had a conviction against him. That was the man who was sitting in judgment upon him today. He, however, had no other objection to the personnel of the Committee. Otherwise, he thought that he would get a fair “go”. He would give the Committee all assistance, and he was out to find all the guilty people concerned.

Mr O’Reilly’s Statement

Mr JF O’Reilly, replying to the statement made by Mr Buckley, said that it would seem that he had a “nark” on Mr Buckley because he was not appointed a JP on the ground that a conviction had been recorded against him. Mr Buckley and he had not been friends for some time. Buckley and he had been Labor candidates at the municipal elections, and owing to Buckley double-crossing him and playing him a mean, low-down, dirty trick he had turned him (Buckley) down, and had not been associated with him since. Referring to the position of JP, he would like to say he had been in the Labor Movement since he was a child. He was recommended for appointment as a JP by the Secretary of the Surry Hills Labor League. The recommendation was turned down, but that did not trouble him. In fact, he was not seeking the appointment.

He had contested a selection ballot with Mr Buckley in 1916 for the Surry Hills seat. Although he (Mr O’Reilly) was defeated for the selection he had supported Mr Buckley. Later, Mr Buckley found out that he (Mr O’Reilly) had some time previously been turned down for the position of a Justice of the Peace. Mr Buckley had also found out that he (Mr O’Reilly), when a child under 14 years of age, “had been run in for resisting the police”. (Laughter) That was the conviction he had against him which Mr Buckley had referred to.

Echo of 1917 Strike

He had in his possession at the present time a document which was very interesting. They would remember the time when Messrs Kavanagh, Claude Thompson, and Mr Buckley were charged with conspiracy in connection with the 1917 strike. During that case there were certain people in the Labor Movement who were after Mr Buckley’s seat if he were convicted, so that they would get his seat. Mr Buckley came to him at the time, and said that he (Mr O’Reilly) was the only one he was prepared to trust. He (Mr Buckley) asked him in the event of a conviction would he (Mr O’Reilly) contest the selection for the seat, and if successful would he support Mr Buckley’s wife and family out of the Parliamentary salary. He agreed, and an agreement was drawn up. That agreement was now in his possession. Mr Buckley, he alleged, was now trying to throw dust in their eyes. He did not know whether Mr Buckley was guilty in connection with the allegations regarding the ballot-boxes. As a member
of the Committee appointed by the Conference, he would probe every
detail to find out who were the guilty ones, also innocent ones. He would
bring in a decision in accordance with the facts without fear or favour.

Mr Buckley, in a further statement, claimed that Mr O’Reilly was
misstating the position regarding his seat during the 1917 strike. He
alleged that O’Reilly made the suggestion to him regarding taking over
his seat should he be convicted.

Mr O’Reilly (addressing delegates) said that was a deliberate lie.

The President (Mr Willis) read a letter from Mr J. Watts, Vice-
President of the Railway Workers’ Industry Branch of the AWU pointing
out that their members were not associated with charges in connection
with the “crook” ballot boxes or other allegations of corruption.

**The 1919 Breakaway Section**

Mr Baddeley, MLA (Northern Miners), asked the President, in view of
his ruling that Labor men outside the Movement were free to seek re-
admission, what was the position of those men who broke away in 1919
but who were still outside the Movement?

President Willis said he would rule that, in accordance with the
decisions of the All-Australian Trade Union Congress, and the Brisbane
Interstate Labor Conference, all persons who were outside the Move-
ment, but who had continued to work in the interests of the working
class, were entitled to re-admission to the ALP with continuity of
membership.

**President’s Casting Vote Questioned**

At this stage, Mr Seale (Wharf Laborers’ Union) raised an objection to the
President’s vote on the previous Saturday on the question of admitting
working-class organisations. He claimed that under Rule 14 of the
Standing Orders, the President was not entitled to cast a vote in the
affirmative. The rule distinctly set out that he should cast a negative vote.
The President pointed out that if he did not use his original vote, as
allowed for in the rule, his casting vote was equivalent to it. He
characterised Mr Seale’s objection as a mere quibble. Mr Seale said the
President was wrong in taking that view of the matter. As he did not
exercise his original vote at the time, he had no right to exercise it at a
time when he was asked to give a casting vote. In moving dissent from
the President’s ruling, Mr Seale continued to address delegates on the
question, and disorder prevailed. The President named him three times,
then ordered him to leave the room. Mr Seale refused to go. General
disorder prevailed for some time. Mr Seale said he refused to withdraw
from the position he took up, claiming that the President had illegally
exercised a vote on a very important matter. After some time order was restored.

The President returned to the question of the re-admission of bona-fide Laborites to the Movement. He said that as far as he knew, the Brisbane Conference ruled that any of the 1919 breakaway men who had not allied themselves with any anti-Labor Movement could, if they applied, come back with full continuity rights.

**Brisbane Conference Decision**

Mr Magrath (Printing Trades) asked the President to produce such a decision. While it was only fair that these men should be re-admitted to membership, it had to be remembered that they had broken the rules previously, therefore they should not be allowed to come back with full rights and be on the standing of members who had remained loyal throughout. He moved dissent from the President’s ruling.

By this time the President had secured an official copy of the proceedings of the Brisbane Conference, and read the decision of the Conference on the matter, which was as follows: “That this Conference affirms the desirability of making an endeavour to unite politically all sections in the fight, and that all those who have been officially disconnected from the ALP, but have continued to work in the working-class interests, be re-admitted to the ALP if they so desire without loss of continuity, and that the State Conference be recommended to carry this into effect.”

Mr AÈ O’Brien (Musicians’ Union) claimed that it was only a recommendation to the State Branches.

The matter was put to a vote, and the President’s ruling was upheld by 126 votes to 58.

**Work for New Executive**

Mr Magrath (chairman of the Agenda Committee), amplifying his statement of the previous evening, said that during the next six months the Executive would have to deal with some most important problems bearing upon reconstruction. The matters to be dealt with included the ballot-box report, the appointment of a committee to revise the rules, the question of preselection ballots, the proposed reconstruction of the Executive, the question of the right of Parliamentarians to sit on the Executive, etc. There were nearly 40 motions on the agenda paper relating to the reconstruction of the Executive. These matters could not possibly be dealt with during the life of the present Conference. He suggested that Christmas might be a suitable time for re-assembling the Conference to receive the various reports. Then the 1924-25 Executive could be elected under whatever new rules might be adopted. The matter
of the leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party had also to be considered; but Rule 33 was most decisive, and already the Conference had affirmed the principle of Executive control. Then there was motion No 38 on the agenda paper, which asked the Conference to deal with Mr Lambert’s ruling that members of the Legislative Council were not “members of Parliament”. He moved: “That Conference recommend the Executive to appoint a Committee to consider the revision of the rules, including Rule 6, and consider recommendations dealing with selection ballots, the representation of members of Parliament on the Executive, and schemes for the reconstruction of the Executive with regard to the grouping scheme of the Industrial Conference and the country members’ scheme, and other matters.”

Mr Howie (Coopers’ Union) moved that the Committee of seven appointed on the previous evening to deal with the question of preselection ballots should act in the matters outlined by Mr Magrath. Messrs Bell, Lang, and McLelland supported the motion, while Mr AE Roberts supported the amendment. On a vote being taken, the amendment was defeated, and the motion carried.

**Next Conference at Easter 1924**

Mr Magrath then moved: “That Conference further direct that all recommendations which the Executive is proposed to make be submitted to branches and unions in time to permit of Conference meeting during the Christmas holiday period”.

An amendment was moved by Mrs Dwyer, “That the Conference be held next Easter, instead of Christmas”.

The amendment was carried.

Mr Magrath moved: “That the Executive for 1924-25 shall be elected under any new scheme adopted by the Conference, and it be recommended that the recommendations of the Executive shall have precedence at the next Conference”.

**Rule 33**

Mr Magrath said the next matter to be considered was Rule 33, which read as follows: “The Executive between Conference has plenary powers to deal with all matters of policy, platform, and rules, and their decisions must be observed by all members of the Movement; but any member of the ALP shall have the right of appeal to the Conference next following from any Executive edict”. He said that the Agenda Committee wished to draw attention to the fact that the Conference had already affirmed the principle of Executive control when dealing with the question of Mr Dooley’s re-admission to the Movement.
Mr Stewart (Western Suburbs) asked for a ruling upon the word “policy”. He wanted to know if the Executive had power to interfere with the leagues or the Parliamentary Party as in the recent dispute. The President replied: “I rule that between Conferences the Executive is the supreme governing body of the Labor Movement. But these powers should be exercised within the meaning of the rules of the constitution. If those powers are used in a tyrannical manner, then it is for the Conference to deal with the Executive. Plenary meant full, and the Executive, therefore, had full powers.”

It was sought to move several amendments, but the President said they were out of order. He could accept no amendment on the principle. The rule could not be altered without a two-thirds majority. If there were motions in the agenda book they must be brought up in their proper order and dealt with. He would say again that the rule gave full powers to hang, draw, and quarter any member – that was so long as it was within the constitution of the Movement. Mr AE O’Brien said that if the records were turned up it would be found that the rule was illegally in the rule book.

The President said he could not help how it got there. If a wrong had been done, steps should have been taken to have it corrected.

**Question of Free Speech**

A delegate asked the President if, under Rule 33, the Executive had the right to elect the Parliamentary leader. The President said it had not. He ruled that the rule gave tremendous power to the Executive within the four corners of the constitution, but from his point of view those powers should not be exercised unless in extreme cases.

Mr Magrath asked whether the rule gave the Executive the right to suppress free speech in the leagues and affiliated unions. The President said that, in his opinion, that was the last thing any Executive should do. The Executive had no right to prevent free speech in the leagues and unions.

Mr Stewart asked that steps be taken to incorporate in Rule 33, as its interpretation, the ruling just given, and its interpretation could come before the next Conference. The President said that that would be done.

**MsLC and Executive Positions**

Mr Magrath asked for the President’s ruling as to whether members of the Upper House were “members of Parliament”. He said that the matter arose out of a ruling by Mr Lambert, when President, that members of the Upper House were not “members of Parliament”.

The President: “I have no hesitation in ruling that a member of the Upper House is a Member of Parliament”.

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Mr Denford desired to move: “That no member of the Legislative Council should be eligible for a seat on the Executive”.

The President: “There is no necessity for the motion. Members of the Legislative Council are members of Parliament. That anybody should have given a ruling contrary to that astounds me”.

Mr Magrath moved: “That regarding applications for re-admission to the Movement, these matters should be left to the Executive to deal with”. Several names were mentioned, including that of Mr A Griffith.

Mr Davidson drew the President’s attention to Rule 2, which read: “Any member of Parliament or conscriptionist candidate expelled for advocating conscription shall not at any time, under any pretext, be re-admitted to membership in the Labor Movement”. The President said the rule was very definite, and would have to stand.

A delegate asked the President’s ruling on Rule 4: “Any member or ex-member of the ALP who opposed a selected Labor candidate shall be excluded from membership for the four years following”. The President said that the rule was also very definite, and would have to stand.

Mr AE O’Brien: “On that ruling, Mr President, I challenge the membership of Messrs Howie, Garden, Denford, and all the members of the Communist Party.”

The question was put, and Mr Magrath’s motion was carried.

**Immigration**

The special committee appointed by Conference to state the case for Labor against immigration presented a report, ready by Mr Baddeley, MLA. The report was as follows:

“The policy of the Labor Party on immigration is clear. We believe the immigration policy of all National Governments is conducted, not in the interests of the workers, but in the interests of the employers. For many years past the immigration policies of the various National State Governments in Australia have been deliberately designed to flood the labor market in the industrial, rural, and urban centres, and pave the way for lowering the standard of living of the Australian workers.

“Owing to the energetic propaganda conducted by the Sydney Labor Research and Information Bureau at the instance of Australian Trade Unions, the active anti-immigration policy instituted in the British Labour press, extending to debates in the British House of Commons, and pursued vigorously by wide distributions of leaflets throughout the workshops of various trades in Britain, has forced the National Government advocates of immigration to restrict their plans mainly to immigrants for the land.

“The land immigration policy is directed no less against the industrial workers of Australia because:

“1. The Australian State Governments are already unable to provide suitable land for more than a small fraction of the applicants.

“2. Unemployment already exists in country areas.
“As the bulk of those immigrating for land work are unsuitable they inevitably and quickly drift back to the cities. It is clear that the employers are still conducting their immigration policy to break down the wages and to lengthen the hours of the workers in industry through this policy.

“The Australian Labor Party is against the people of this State being overburdened with interest on financial credit from oversea for immigration until adequate provision is made for the working class of this country.

“The working class of this country have not been consulted in any way on the question of immigration, but the whole matter has been arranged by the representative of the capitalist class – the Nationalist Government. We therefore strongly protest against the working class being excluded in the consideration of any scheme.

“We also disapprove of the Nationalist Government being used to have land made available which in most cases is overvalued, as well as unsuitable for purpose used.

“The Australian workers warn the workers of Britain and other countries that the Australian labor market in every branch of industry and on the land is amply provided for, and in most cases glutted with masses of unemployed workers.

“They further warn all fellow-workers overseas to disregard any immigration policy which is not endorsed by the Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party of this country.

“Recognising nevertheless, the fact that many thousands of deluded workers are being continually dumped on the Australian Labor market with no guarantee whatever of stable employment, it is recommended, in accordance with the proposal of the Australian Labor Party, West Australian Branch, that a Labor Immigration Depot should be established in each State of the Commonwealth for the reception and information of immigrant workers.

“The principal duties of such Labor Immigration Depots should be:

“1. To issue regularly to overseas Labor organisations statistical information re employment and unemployment in Australia.

“2. To get into touch with immigrant workers on their arrival and inform them of the conditions obtaining in the various trades affected.

“3. To provide a clearing house, where all immigrant workers, who have been deceived by the immigration authorities, or underpaid and badly treated by the employers, can collect, organise, and have their cases brought to the light of publicity and to the notice of their respective organisations overseas.

“4. To provide a centre where Australian Trade Unions whose occupation is being flooded with immigrant workers can apply for the purpose of taking effective steps to counteract the flow of immigrants into their particular trade.

“We further demand that a more drastic examination of immigrants should be made both prior to embarkation and on arrival in Australia in order to prevent the introduction of diseased and mentally deficient persons. Such examination be made to cover all diseases that would tend to undermine
the health of the nation. It is clear that many immigrants arriving are mentally deficient and are becoming a charge upon the State.

“The sub-committee therefore suggests that each State Labor Council should be invited to confer with each State Branch of the Australian Labor Party for the purpose of establishing such Labor Immigration Depots by joint action.”

The report was adopted and Conference adjourned till the following night (June 13).

**Day 10, Wednesday, 13 June 1923**

**Northern Miners’ Dispute**

As soon as Conference opened last Wednesday night Mr Ryan (Portland) said he wished to secure the suspension of the standing orders in order that Conference might consider the question of suspending Mr J Bailey pending consideration of the charges alleged against him. Considerable disturbance took place, and the matter was not proceeded with.

Mr JM Kelly asked whether the ruling given by the President on the previous evening applied to members of the Barrier Unions. The President said it did.

The President said that the letter from the Irish Envoys’ Defence Fund, and which had been referred to the agenda committee, had now been returned with the recommendation that it be sent along to the Federal Parliamentary Party, and that they be asked to make an effort to carry out the wishes of the defence committee. The recommendation was adopted.

Mr Hatfield (Northern Miners) secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved: “That this Conference extends to the Northern Miners its full support in their fight against the coal proprietors, and that we recognise they are fighting for a vital principle of the Trade Union Movement. He pointed out that some of the men had been fighting since last December, when the question of victimisation cropped up in the Whitburn Lodge. Many men had been victimised without any charge being preferred against them. From April 14 the whole of the Maitland men had been locked out by the Coal Barons. The miners had always ready to help other unionists in trouble, and now they asked that other unionists should assist them. There were 6000 miners out on strike, and it should not be left to the other 16,000 miners to keep them from starving. The fight involved a principle of far-reaching dimensions. A vital principle was at stake. The Coal Barons were trying to victimise about 1800 men.

Mr Mills (Wharf Laborers) wished to add an addendum relating to the Waterside Workers and the “scab” Labor Bureau. The President
thought that the two matters should be dealt with separately. Mr Knight (Western Miners) seconded the motion, and gave various examples of how victimisation was carried out by the Coal Barons.

**Vital Principle at Stake**

Mr JJ Hudson (Northern Miners) said that if the bosses got away with the victimisation “stunt” on the workers, it would be applied to other industries. That was why the miners’ fight should be the concern of all unionists. The Coal Barons were trying to weed out their best fighters. The men still working had levied themselves 15 per cent and would pay more if required, but the burden was very heavy. That was why they were appealing to other unionists.

The motion was carried on the voices.

**Overseas Shipping Bureau**

Mr W Mills (Wharf Laborers) then moved: “That the Overseas Shipping Labor Bureau in Sydney be declared black and a distinct menace to labor in Australia, and that any man working through the Bureau and not being a member of the Waterside Workers’ Federation be declared ineligible to be in the Movement”.

He said that the last Labor Government had not used its power to abolish the “scab” Bureau. That was because they were not the right class of men. Labor Parliamentary parties of late had not done their work as true and honest Labor men. He considered that the duty of a Labor Parliament was to go the whole hog in the interests of the workers. It was up to the Labor Movement to get right down to bedrock and declare itself on this matter. There should be a definite preference to unionists.

He suggested that all the waterside unions should get together and see what could be done in the matter. They thought they were going to get something from the Council of Action, but it referred the matter to the Emergency Council, but the latter body had not sat since. It was up to the Movement to make a definite stand regarding the “scab” Labor Bureau.

**A Weapon against Unionists**

Mr Seale (Wharf Laborers’ Union) supported the motion. He said that the “scab” Bureau, if allowed to develop, would be used as a weapon against other unions. It had been used against the seamen in their fight against the Union SS Co. Men getting work through the “scab” Bureau had to sign a statement that they were not members of the Waterside Workers’ Union. They talked about the strength of the industrialists; here was a great testimonial to their weakness, in that they allowed that to continue. When the members of the Parliamentary Party had failed to do their duty
in the matter, the Labor Executive had not been quite so ready to expel
them as they had been to expel Mr Dooley. But if the politicians had
failed, so had the industrialists. They took the matter to the Council of
Action; it referred the matter to the Emergency Council. The latter body
held a meeting and then asked the Waterside Workers to formulate
proposals. These proposals embodied a complete boycott by every trade
unionist of every non-union overseas ship. But nothing further had been
heard of their proposals. The Emergency Council did not sit again. As far
as the miners were concerned, he could say that the watersiders would
render ever assistance.

**Effectiveness of Motion Questioned**

Mr Howie (Coopers’ Union) doubted whether the resolution would
achieve the object they had in mind. He reminded them that economi-

cal pressure had compelled many men to look for work through the “scab”
Bureau. One reason why finality had not been reached in the matter was
because of the attitude of officials of certain unions. He remembered a
time when the “scab” Bureau workers were willing to join the Coal
Lumpers’ Union, but the latter organisation would not take them in. If
the industrial party had the same power as the Parliamentary Party it
would have dealt with the “scab” Bureau in quick time. Ways and means
would have to be devised whereby the matter could be settled.

Mr D Murray, MLA, pointed out that after the “scab” Bureau had
been formed by the Holman Nationalist Government it was taken over
by the Federal Government. When the Labor Government came into
office it had not the power to deal with the Bureau.

A delegate from the Coal Lumpers’ Union said that regarding the
proposal that his union should admit members of the “scab” Bureau, that
was a matter they would not tolerate for a moment. He contended that
the Waterside Workers and the Coal Lumpers had not got fair treatment
from the State Government.

Mr JS Garden (Sailmakers) said that the Waterside Workers’ Union
had asked him to get in touch with the “scab” Bureau. He went down
and addressed members of the Bureau. The men were willing to come
into the bona-fide union, but the then Secretary would not have them. At
that time he was continually on the waterfront trying to deal with the
problem. After Messrs Seale and Mills had replied, the motion was
carried on the voices.

Mr O’Neill (Oxley Electorate Council) revived a trouble that arose at
the last election when, he alleged, his candidature had been opposed by
Mr Fitzgerald, MLA, who asked Labor supporters to vote for an indepen-
dent candidate in preference to him (O’Neill). After a short discussion, it
was decided to refer the matter to the incoming Executive for
consideration.
**Re-Admission of Alderman Jones**

Alderman Jones of Paddington, whose appeal for reinstatement Conference had decided to hear, addressed the Conference. He had been true to Labor all through. He was not a conscriptionist – on the other hand he had been secretary of the two anti-conscription campaigns. He had been expelled from Labor after a service of 14 years because he had opposed the amalgamation of the Paddington and Sydney Councils. It was true that he had nominated as an Independent Labor candidate, but this was a protest against his treatment by the Executive. Even if he was not re-admitted he would continue to work in the interests of Labor.

Mr R Stapleton (Paddington) moved: “That Alderman Jones’s statement be accepted, and that he be re-admitted to the Labor Movement”.

A delegate, referring to Rule 4, said that the President should stick to the rule in this matter. The President said that while he could only rule in the terms of Rule 4, which said that a member opposing a Labor member must be excluded for four years, he recognised that other men who had been expelled and who had opposed Labor candidates had been re-admitted.

A delegate: Stick to the rule!

The President: You are not going to shelter behind me in this matter. You will have to settle the matter yourselves and take the consequence. I say that other men have been re-admitted. They are in this Conference tonight.

Cries of “Name them.”

The President: There is Minahan and Denford. Ratcliffe is another.

(Uproar)

Mr Minahan, MLA: That’s not true. I was never put out.

Mrs Fowler (Botany): Alderman Jones could be kept out, but Denford who opposed Labor candidates was re-admitted.

Mr Denford: I did no such thing.

Mrs Fowler: You opposed Labor candidates at Botany in 1920. You got 68 votes. I ought to know. I was in that campaign.

Mr Denford: I only spoke from Labor platforms.

*The Worker*, of March 25, 1920, shows that Mr HL Denford stood as a Socialist candidate at Botany. Other members of the Socialist ticket were Messrs Corcoran, Moroney, Shields and Christensen.)

**Mr Minahan’s Explanation**

Mr Minahan (in a personal explanation) said he had not been out of the Labor Movement for 32 years.

A voice: You “scabbed” all your life.

Mr Minahan: I said when the IWW men were falsely imprisoned on corrupt evidence that I would do all I could to get them out. I refused to
withdraw that statement, and the Executive withdrew my endorsement. I was put fifth on the poll, but the electors placed me on top. (Cheers)

A Voice: Your money put you there.

Mr Minahan: You are a liar. (Uproar)

Same voice: And you’re another. I got some of your money. (Laughter)

Mr Minahan said he had always been true to Labor and would remain so till the end of his days.

Mrs Bailey said that in view of some of the recent re-admissions to the Movement she would suggest that Mr Stapleton add to his motion:

“That Rule 4 be deleted from the constitution to allow Hughes, Holman, and others to come back into the ALP”. (Laughter)

The motion to re-admit Alderman Jones to the Movement was carried on the voices.

Mr Nulty suggested that the question of the application from Mr Arthur Griffith for re-admission be referred to the incoming Executive. Conference carried a motion to hear Mr Griffith at a later session.

**Storemen and Packers’ Claim**

Mr Roberts (Storemen and Packers’ Union) moved a motion: “That Conference withdraw the Labor endorsement from Mr TJ Lang, MLA, for refusing to pay to the employees in the Harbor Trust bonds the amount to which it had been resolved they were entitled”. He said the trouble dated back to a time when his union made an effort to get 17/- per week added to the wages of the storemen employed in the Harbor Trust bonds. They took the matter to the Court, which said that all they could give was the basic wage, but suggested that the matter could be dealt with by the Crown. They made recommendations to Mr Lang, but could not get the money. In 1921 Conference agreed that the claims were fair and just and should be paid. Other employees got increases, but not the storemen, who should have been brought up to £4/15/- per week. When the storemen got a Federal award the amount was £4/14/6, which showed that their claim was not unjust. It had been asserted that if the Crown paid the money, it would be creating a bad precedent and other workers would put in their claims. There were 12 storemen involved, and they had sacrificed £17/17/- each. When the Harbor Trust refused to pay the money, the Treasurer (then Mr Lang) should have demanded that it be paid. The speaker also blamed the last Executive for not moving in the matter. When the matter was mentioned some of them said, “For God’s sake don’t blame us, blame Lang”. He thought the last Executive was just as much to blame as Mr Lang.

Mr Dan Clynes (Storemen and Packers) seconded the motion. The injustice was first perpetrated by the Holman Government. When the basic wage was £3, the men had a 10/- margin. When the £3/17/-
declaration was made they only secured that amount. He thought that if the Executive of the day had displayed the same enthusiasm and courage as they had in the expulsion of Mr Dooley the matter would have been settled long ago.

**Harbor Trust a Law unto Itself**

Mr Magrath (Printing Trades) said he was a member of the 1921 Executive, which had been blamed for not seeing that the money was paid. Mr Roberts came to last Conference with a motion of censure against the Executive for alleged negligence, but after the facts had been stated Conference wiped the motion of censure off the records. The union was deregistered for the part it took in the 1917 strike, and it went to the Federal Court. As a result of that it lost the State basic increase from £3 to £3/17/-. The Harbor Trust Commissioners claimed that they paid whatever was the prescribed rate. The Federal rate was a lower rate, and the union wanted the higher State rate, which members would have got had they remained registered under the State Court. The Harbor Trust refused to pay the higher rate. Mr Lang had nothing to do with the matter. Mr Lang attended a meeting of the 1921 Executive and pointed out that the Harbor Trust worked under statutory provisions of an Act of Parliament, and could do as it liked. Mr Lang could not interfere, though he had done all he could to urge the payment of the money. A suggestion was made that Mr Lang should write an order directing that the money should be paid from State funds, but they had to remember that withdrawals from State funds were surrounded by a tremendous number of reservations. The Executive and Mr Lang had done all they could to get the money, but like the Railway Commissioners, the Harbor Trust was a law unto itself, and it simply refused to take any notice of Mr Lang. Personally, he objected to a union coming year after year to Conference with its case. That was not prosecuting its claim. It was persecuting an individual.

**Mr Lang Explains Position**

Mr Lang, MLA, began his speech by referring to an attack upon him in the current issue of *The Communist*, and in a former issue. When Mr Blakeley was speaking at the Conference on the previous Saturday he pointed out that *The Communist* was sling mud at Labor members, but made no attempt to attack the common foe, the ‘Nationalists’. Mr Denford objected to Mr Blakeley using that argument against the Communists when they had decided to come into the Labor Party. Yet while the editor of *The Communist* was taking this point he was attacking Labor men in his paper.

Mr Denford (Ironworkers): I never raised an objection to Mr Blakeley mentioning the article.
Mr Lang said he did not object. However, to get down to the matter at issue, the Harbor Trust Commissioners said they had never refused to pay the men the same wage as was paid outside the Trust’s employ. In 1918 the union got a Federal award of £3/5/-, and the Trust paid this. In 1919 they were paid £3/10/-, In 1920 the union and the employers outside had agreed to pay £3/16/3, and the Trust paid this rate. Then came the NSW basic wage declaration of £3/17/-, The Trust said the men were not entitled to it. The matter was taken to Court, and Mr Justice Edmunds fixed the wage at £3/17/-. The Trust then paid this wage. After the Labor Government came into power he was asked to increase the wages with the margin of 19/-. He (Mr Lang) did not think it was fair to ask him to bear the sins of the Holman Government. It had to be remembered that the Harbor Trust was working under an Act of Parliament which gave the Commissioners supreme power. They refused to pay the back money claimed.

A Voice: Why didn’t you sack them?

Federal Awards Better for Men

Mr Lang said that when two positions on the Trust became vacant he appointed Labor men. One of them was Mr W O’Conner, Secretary of the Coal Lumpers’ Union. The union had seen Mr O’Connor after his appointment, who replied that they were not entitled to the money. They did not pursue the matter any further. The union had done better under Federal awards. Instead of dropping back rapidly, as they would have done under a State basic wage, it was not until July of this year that they would go back to £4/8/6. The Trust had always paid whichever award was the highest, and had always been looked upon as fair and just employers. He could not compel the Trust to pay the money; the Commissioners could snap their fingers at him. He exercised all the authority he could in the matter. Under the circumstances the motion was a gross injustice to him.

The motion was defeated.

Conference Closes

Mr Baddeley, of the committee appointed by Conference to investigate the position of the Labor News, moved that the Labor News be continued under the control of Mr J Power, and used for education and propaganda within the Movement. It should be placed on a sound basis, and everything done to push the paper. The motion was carried.

Just as the motion for adjournment was about to be put, a delegate moved that the adjournment be till next Easter. This was carried on the voices. The motion was carried so quickly that many delegates did not realise that the Conference deliberations had come to an end.
CHAPTER 8
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 18 – 26 April 1924

Report in *The Sydney Morning Herald*

There are quite full reports of the 1924 Conference in *The Australian Worker* (23, 30 April 1924) and in the new *Labor Daily* (19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28 April 1924). Both journals, while reporting the same events, provide a recognisable factional slant, especially in the sub-headings – *The Worker* was the journal of the AWU, the minority faction which had been swept out of power at the 1923 Conference, while the *Labor Daily* was very much the voice of the Lang faction. I have preferred to use the version in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. ‘Granny’ *Herald*, of course, had its own bias, but it had no great preference for one faction over the other. Spelling is different from the other journals, with the *Herald* still insisting on ‘Labour’ over ‘Labor’.

While the Willis State Executive was clearly in control, once again sweeping all the positions in the election of the new Executive, there was substantial opposition on the floor of Conference, making this a very stormy affair, with very little business conducted that was not directly related to factional control. There were mentions in the debates about three tickets for the Executive elections: one was clearly that of the Willis and Lang forces; another was the very vocal opposition from the AWU; the third was the more radical section of the 1923 Executive which was sympathetic to the acceptance of Communists into the Labor Party (led by J Beasley, J Kilburn and J Garden). The parliamentary party, which in former years had been fairly united in resisting domination by the AWU, was now hopelessly factionalised. The winning ticket for the new Executive renewed the positions only of the moderates, which could be interpreted as a shift to the right. Despite the *Herald* constantly referring to the Langites as ‘Trade Hall Reds’, the members of that faction were scarcely ‘Red’, in the sense of being sympathetic to Communists, and in this Conference and election for the Executive they tried to dissociate themselves from the more radical voices in the party. Another interpretation of the change in factional leadership was that it involved a purging of fractious and critical elements. So, leading women in the party
such as Kate Dwyer, her sister Annie Golding, and Eve Seery were also excluded, leaving the very traditional Mrs Melville and a young Lilian Fowler to provide a more compliant women's voice.

An important decision of this Conference was its refusal to allow members of the Communist Party to be simultaneously members of the ALP.

Although the Executive usually had the numbers, it did not get everything it wanted. A committee dominated by the Executive that had investigated the rigged ballot box scandal of the 1923 Conference recommended the expulsion of John Bailey and a number of other members of the old AWU-dominated Executive. Conference confirmed the expulsions of J Bailey, MLA, Gavin Sutherland, AW Buckley and Alderman Bramston, but declined the request to expel TJ Smith, MLC, and PJ Minahan, MLA.

Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1923

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Ladies and Gentlemen:
The 33rd Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is hereby submitted for your consideration.

New Branches

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The following Unions have also affiliated under Rules 19, and 6:-

- NSW Society of Brushmakers.
- Amalgamated Carpenters.
- Sydney Cabmen.
- Amalgamated Engineering Union.
- Coal Trimmers (Newcastle).
- Australian Plumbers.
- Gasfitters’ Union.
- Fed. Ironworkers (Lithgow).
- Fed. Ironmoulders (Newcastle).
- Miscellaneous Workers.
- Sheet Metal Workers.
- Carrington Coal & Coke Shipping Union.

**Executive meetings**

Owing to matters of paramount importance referred to the Executive by the last Conference, these including the Ballot Box Investigations, revision of boundaries and Rules, etc., your Executive has experienced during the nine months it has been in office an exceedingly busy term. The matters mentioned herein, and presented to Conference, leave untouched many subjects which have engaged the attention of the Executive.

During the term the Executive has held 31 meetings, including special meetings. Attendances have been as follows: AC Willis 29 meetings, EC Magrath 27, JJ Tyrrell 23, J Beasley 31, G Buckley 21, W Caribnes 14, J Concannon 22, F Conroy 30, J Culbert 27, D Clyne 26, T Doyle 27, Mrs K Dwyer 24, W Ely 24, J Flanagan 29, Mrs L Fowler 30, Graves 25, Miss S Johnson 31, J Kilburn 24, Lonergan 26, McGarry 31, H Knight (alt.) 8, WJ Gibb 31, Mrs G Melville 26, WJ Mills 31, Miss S Mitchell 31, W Mostyn 23, JF O’Reilly 25, D Rees 23, A Rutherford 26, G Smith 31, PV Stokes 29, JT Sweeney 21, TJ Swiny 29, JS Garden (retired) 15.
Adjustment of Boundaries.

With the object of ending friction in certain metropolitan electorates, the Boundaries Committee has been sitting continuously, and several electorates have been finally organised, and the boundaries of others are still under consideration. Those in which finality have been reached are: Botany, Balmain, North Shore, Parramatta, Western Suburbs.

Ballot Box Scandal.

The Committee which was deputed to probe the alleged malpractice in the use of ballot boxes, came to most important conclusions after conducting a lengthy and exhaustive inquiry. The status of several prominent members of the Movement has been affected by the Committee’s conclusions which were adopted by the Executive, and a number of appeals therefrom will be before Conference. The work of the Committee was more than ordinarily onerous and exacting, but it accepted the responsibility delegated to it by the last Conference in the earnest desire to free the Labor Movement from the reproach of corruption which was freely hurled against it, and which threatened to lower its influence and prestige over the length and breadth of the State. Your Executive will submit the fullest report on the matter to Conference.

Some statements have been circulated to create the impression that we desired to avoid giving publicity to the evidence collected by the Committee. Such statements are quite beside the truth. When requests were made to publish the evidence, the Executive carried a motion which made the whole of it available to any newspaper which cared to publish it in substantial portions in consecutive issues. None applied. We proposed to print it in the Labor News which the Worker Trustees were publishing for us, but the manager of the Worker refused to print the Labor News with the evidence in. The Worker or any other paper could have published the whole of the matter at any time, and the Executive, consistent with its decision, would have welcomed the widest publicity.

Report of committee appointed by the NSW ALP 1923 Conference to investigate the question of the alleged fraudulent ballot boxes

We, the undersigned, elected as a Committee to investigate the charges made in the matter of alleged fraudulent ballot boxes, beg to report as follows, viz.: We commenced our investigations on 5th June, 1923, and held very many meetings, concluding last night, 9th August, 1923. During our inquiries we examined the following witnesses, viz., Messrs R Stapleton, T Smith, MLC, PE Coleman, MHR, W Carey, General Secretary ALP, W Gibbs, Assistant Secretary ALP, JM Power, Past President ALP, CC Lazzarini, MLA, JT Lang, MLA, J Scouller, L Smith, D Ryan, J Cummings, Tom Arthur (Returning Officer), AW Buckley, Alderman RD Bramston, Gavin Sutherland, TS Bartle, Les Smith (Clerical Assoc.), Miss May Matthews, L Kirkwood, Alderman M Bourke, E Cohen, D
O’Sullivan, and R Sproule, MLC. Your Committee beg to report that they did not unduly hasten their investigation, in order that every person concerned should have an opportunity of attending and being heard. The evidence of most of the witnesses was taken in shorthand by Miss Floyd of the ALP Office, and will be submitted to you in its proper order.

After careful and impartial examination of the whole of the evidence adduced, we beg to recommend as follows:

We recommend to the Executive that Alderman R Bramston be expelled from the Labor Movement.

We recommend to the Executive that Mr AW Buckley be expelled from the Labor Movement.

We recommend to the Executive that Mr Gavin Sutherland be expelled from the Labor Movement.

We recommend to the Executive that Mr J Bailey, MLA, be expelled from the Labor Movement.

We recommend to the Executive that Mr TJ Smith, MLC, be expelled from the Labor Movement for a period of two (2) years.

The Committee desire to place on record its utter disapproval of the action of Mr PE Coleman, MHR, who, on his own evidence, admits having had in his possession a ballot box, knowing same to have a sliding panel. The Committee is of the opinion that Mr PE Coleman committed a grave error in failing to report immediately to the Central Executive, the governing body of the Movement.

The Committee are unanimously of the opinion that Mr PJ Minahan, MLA, was aware that fraudulent ballot boxes were in existence, he having been informed at the time the Sydney Selection Ballot was being held. The Committee invited Mr PJ Minahan on two occasions to appear and give evidence to them. Mr PJ Minahan failed to appear, but notified the Committee by letter that he had no knowledge of crook ballot boxes being in existence until it appeared in the Press. In view of Mr Minahan’s refusal to appear and assist the Committee in their investigations, and believing from the evidence before us that Mr Minahan knew of the existence of fraudulent ballot boxes, without taking any steps to expose same, we are of the opinion that Mr Minahan should be expelled from the Movement for a period of two (2) years.

The Committee desire to report that up to the present we have been unable to locate the whereabouts of Mr J Farrell, one of the parties named. We are, therefore, of the opinion that the Executive should give the Committee further time for the purpose of giving Mr J Farrell an opportunity of stating his case before the Committee.

In the case of Mr Tom Arthur, the Committee is of the opinion that his case should stand over to allow the Committee to give further consideration to the evidence before them.

(Signed) AC Willis, Chairman.
JF O’Reilly, G Smith, D Rees, J Howie, Members of the Committee.
J Bailey’s expulsion from the ALP.—Committee’s findings and reasons.—Faked ballot boxes.

As there appears to have grown up in some quarters the idea that it would have been fairer to Mr J Bailey, MLA, and advisable in the interests of the Committee, that the recent findings of the Committee of the ALP appointed to inquire into the faked ballot box incident and other matters, should be published in the daily Press, and the evidence on which such findings were based should be made known and given to a considerable extent in detail, and as the Central Branch of the AWU has at the instigation of Mr J Bailey made a formal request that the findings and grounds therefore should be stated, the Committee has decided to make the following announcement.

The ALP Committee was in the first place requested to inquire and report as to who were responsible for the scandal in connection with the crook ballot boxes. Of the persons held responsible by the Executive Mr Bailey was one. As he has for some time been active in endeavoring to refute the findings of the Committee as to his guilt and, as a formal request is now made on his behalf to the Committee to state the reasons for his expulsion from the ALP, the Committee is giving a brief summary, confining its remarks to his part in the incident. Accordingly other persons’ names and the part played by them are omitted as far as possible.

It should be understood that this course has been followed, not with the object of concealing their conduct, but because they have not asked for further publication. If, however, they personally request that the evidence relating to them be published, their desire will be complied with.

During the course of the Ballot Box Inquiry several other instances of gross wrongdoing on the part of Mr Bailey were brought under the notice of the Committee, and whilst the Committee has formed decided opinions as to these charges, it is felt that a fuller inquiry, if desired, should be conducted into these matters by such means as the Executive may determine and that as to some of them a duly constituted authority with full power to act as the circumstances warrant should be appointed to thoroughly probe the cases.

Amongst other charges not herein referred to are Mr Bailey’s conduct in connection with the issue of the faked delegates’ badges for use at the ALP Conference, and the use of forged blocks for printing AWU tickets. However, although the present statement relates principally to the ballot box incident, the Committee makes some brief remarks as to the Eden-Monaro selection, and to Mr Bailey’s dastardly methods of attempting to ruin the reputation of opponents.
Faked Ballot Boxes.

The Committee of the ALP Executive found:

1. That a number of ballot boxes, each with a sliding panel had been made just prior to the 1920 Sydney Selection Ballot. (Most of these are now in the possession of the ALP Executive.)
2. That they were made for the obvious purpose of fraudulently manipulating ballots for selections in the Labor Movement.
3. That John Bailey, MLA, was present at the first meeting of those responsible for the scheme to construct and use such ballot boxes.
4. That John Bailey, MLA, was one of the principals responsible for the obtaining and construction of these faked ballot boxes.
5. That John Bailey, MLA, received them on the evening of Thursday, the 15th January, 1920, at Macdonell House.

Evidence was given by the person who received the order for these boxes that he made them as directed and that he left them in the care of John Bailey, to whom he demonstrated the working of a sliding panel at the back of such boxes, and that John Bailey examined them and inquired as to detailed construction which was explained to him by the maker, particularly the working of the sliding panel, and that Mr J Bailey approved and passed them as satisfactory for the desired purpose.

Further, evidence has been given that Mr Bailey in December, 1919, or January, 1920, suggested to a member of the then Executive that ballot boxes should be obtained by the ALP for selection ballots, and in January, 1920, after the delivery of the boxes to John Bailey, this member saw some of these boxes at the AWU Rooms, Macdonell House, for over a fortnight.

Evidence has also been given that a carter who took the boxes in his dray from the place where they were made to Macdonell House helped
the person who made the boxes to carry them as far as the lift, and that this was on the evening of Thursday, the 15th January, 1920.

On the whole of the evidence there can be no question as to Mr Bailey’s complicity in the scheme.

Bailey’s Defence—a False Alibi.

Before the ALP Committee, Mr Bailey rested his defence upon an alibi. On the 18th July last during the course of Mr Bailey’s lengthy cross-examination of the witness who stated he left the boxes in Mr Bailey’s care, and described their working, Mr Bailey after asking “Did I seem very anxious about the sliding panels?” and being told he seemed interested, said: “I can prove I was not in Sydney at the time”.

At a subsequent meeting of the Committee held on the 7th August last, Mr Bailey said: “In accordance with my promise to prove that I was not in Sydney on the night when the maker said he delivered the boxes (that is the 15th January, 1920) I have here sworn declarations from my daughter, son-in-law and Mr Owens.” He then handed these declarations to the Committee.

The Declarations.

Mr Bailey’s daughter, Amy Letticia Bradney of 2 Railway Avenue, Stanmore, swore as follows, viz.: “I resided at Hill Street, Junee Junction, for five years. It was customary for my father to visit me during holidays. In January, 1920, I and my husband went to Tumut to my father’s home with the intention of attending my sister-in-law’s wedding which was to take place on the 7th January, 1920. After attending the wedding we left Tumut and arrived back at our home in Junee Junction on the 10th January, 1920. My father accompanied us on the trip back and remained at our home in Junee until the 15th January, 1920. On this date my father and I and my little daughter accompanied by Mr E Owens travelled by the Albury Mail, arriving at my sister’s place, Enmore, Sydney, on the 16th January, 1920.”

The son-in-law, Oliver Cecil Bradney, made a similar sworn declaration, and added that he kept a diary and could account for all his movements.

Ernest Owens (of the AWU) of Wellington swore as follows: “During 1920 I was employed as an organiser of the Central Branch of the Australian Workers’ Union, and during the month of January, 1920, I was organising on the Irrigation Area. Whilst there industrial trouble necessitated me leaving for Sydney, I left Yanco on the 15th January, 1920, for Sydney per Hay mail train. Whilst waiting at Junee to catch the Albury mail train for Sydney I met Mr J Bailey, MLA, and two other people whom he introduced to me as his son-in-law and daughter, Mr and Mrs Bradney. Bailey asked me where I was going to and I replied
that I was going to Sydney. He invited me to accompany himself and Mrs Bradney who was going to Sydney by the same train. I travelled to Sydney in the same compartment with them.”

He further stated before the Committee that he could fix the date of the time he travelled to Sydney with Mr Bailey from letters he had written and answers received.

Before the AWU Committee Mr Bailey produced not only these sworn declarations, but a number of others to support the alibi set up, viz., that he was not in Sydney from Christmas, 1919, until the 16th January, 1920. Although these further declarations produced to the AWU Committee appear inconsistent with the declarations before the ALP Committee as to Mr Bailey’s whereabouts for a period of about the first fortnight out of the three weeks, and are to that extent mutually destructive, all of them except one positively testify as to his absence from Sydney during the whole period.

Mrs Jessie Bradney, Mr Bailey’s daughter’s mother-in-law, states in her declaration that she sent an invitation card requesting Mr and Mrs J Bailey to be present at the wedding of her daughter which was to take place on the 7th January, 1920, but it may be significant that she refrains from stating that he accepted the invitation or that he attended the wedding, but even if he had attended the wedding, he could still have been in Sydney by the 9th January, and, therefore, by the 15th January, the date of the delivery of the boxes.

These declarations were apparently accepted by the AWU Committee as truthful, and that Committee was in that respect deliberately misled, for if Mr Bailey had not been within some hundreds of miles of Sydney from Christmas, 1919, to the 16th January, 1920, he could not have received the boxes on the date charged.

It might be remarked that it is understood that the AWU Committee did not hold that he was innocent, but only that they did not find the case against him proved.

Unless the ALP Committee definitely rejects this alibi, which means that it finds the persons concerned have made statements that are false in fact, it must be admitted that Mr Bailey could not have received the boxes on the 15th January, 1920. The Committee has definitely rejected the alibi as false, and that for, amongst other reasons, these hereunder set out.

Some Damning Evidence.

Although there is proof that during the earlier part of the period covered by the declarations produced by him, Mr Bailey was in Goulburn at the end of December, 1919, and elsewhere than in Tumut and Junee Junction (the only towns mentioned in the declarations produced by Mr Bailey), reference will here be made only to his movements during the week im-
immediately preceding the date of the delivery of the boxes and to the actual date of such delivery.

On Friday, the 9th January, 1920, Mr Bailey was in Sydney and was present at an Executive meeting of the ALP held at Macdonell House. There is proof of this fact by the rough minutes of the Executive of that date, and by a number of witnesses, including members of the then Executive.

Evidence has been given, which the Committee accepts, that Mr Bailey was in Sydney on the following day, Saturday the 10th January, 1920, and sent a telegram to a member of the then Executive to meet him at Macdonell House that night.

On Monday, the 12th January, 1920, Mr Bailey was also in Sydney and appeared before the Disputes Committee when in conjunction with Mr Harry L Brown, Solicitor, and Mrs Benson, he was charged with unfairly influencing the Eden-Monaro selection ballot in favor of Harry L Brown.

On Tuesday, the 13th January, 1920, Mr Bailey was at Macdonell House and was spoken to and seen by witnesses.

On Thursday, the 10th January, 1920, the day Mr Bailey is charged with receiving the boxes, he was also in Sydney, and in the afternoon of that day he was present at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labor Party at Parliament House. A record of attendances is available and has been inspected.

It has also to be observed that Mr Bailey himself has refrained from making a statutory declaration to the effect that he was out of Sydney during the period covered by the false declarations he produced. If, however, he is now desirous of making such statutory declaration the Committee invites him to make it, as it is still open to receive the declarations, to which due consideration will be given.

In addition to the grave offence charged against him and proved to the satisfaction of the Committee, Mr Bailey, by producing false declarations, misled the AWU Committee. His action was deliberate, and this Committee finds that in addition to nefarious practises, he has been guilty of procuring persons to swear statements which he knew to be false, and they are convinced that he is a man who is altogether unscrupulous in his actions, and whose word is utterly unreliable.

**Bailey’s Misconduct in Eden-Monaro Electorate**

Mr Bailey authorised to be issued, with his name on it, a pamphlet headed “Harry Brown, Who is He?” certifying to alleged facts contained therein. This pamphlet was in support of “Harry Brown” as a candidate for the Eden-Monaro Federal Election.

As a matter of fact the pamphlet contained lies in material parts; for instance, the name of the candidate was incorrect; the date of his birth was wrongly stated for a certain obvious purpose mentioned hereunder,
“Harry Brown” (whose real name is Henry Lesis Brown, a solicitor, of Culwulla Chambers, Sydney) we have good reason to believe he was not duly selected by the leagues, as stated in the pamphlet, as the Labor Candidate. However this last matter may be, it is a fact that Brown was not qualified to submit himself as a candidate for selection, and this Mr Bailey well knew. Mr Brown joined the Labor Movement in 1918, and ran for selection in 1919. Immediately prior to his application to join the Labor Party he had been an active supporter of and worker for the National Party in Drummoyne. Even in 1920 when the Storey Government contemplated making appointments to the Legislative Council, Mr Brown applied for certificate of membership in the Labor Movement for the necessary three years. This was refused, and thereupon tickets of the membership of Brown in the AWU were produced to show three years’ qualification – a city solicitor alleged to have been for over three years a member of a Shearers’ Union. And the object of this was that Brown should be held eligible on his application for appointment to the Legislative Council. We are satisfied that beyond all doubt, Mr Bailey knew of Brown’s lack of qualification to run for selection as a Labor candidate in the Eden-Monaro Electorate, or for his application to be considered for appointment to the Legislative Council.

It is obvious that Brown had no right to AWU membership tickets, and evidence has been given that those faked tickets were obtained for him by Mr Bailey. The Committee regards this matter in a very serious light.

At the time Brown and Bailey were working in the closest cooperation, and the Committee has no doubt whatever as to Mr Bailey’s complicity in this matter.

Attempts to Ruin Opponents.

At this stage the Committee feels that examples of Mr Bailey’s dastardly conduct in his attempt to ruin opponents should be given. It is not pretended by any means that they are exhaustive; these examples indicate his character and methods.

Mr Bailey went to the late Mr John Storey with a letter from a Mr Talbot which he said cast serious aspersions on two Ministers. After a discussion he ostensibly tore the letter up in the presence of the Premier, yet later produced it on demand to Caucus. Caucus thereupon ordered it to be handed over to the Premier. In the meantime, Mr Bailey had it photographed, and it was then published in Smith’s Weekly. The allegations to which such publicity was given were found by Royal Commission to be without foundation.

Mr Bailey circularised to Caucus a declaration he obtained from one Hynes detrimental to the reputation of a prominent Member of Parliament. He denied at Conference that he had ever seen Hynes, yet when a
declaration by Hynes was read out to the effect that Mr Bailey had obtained the matter from him, Mr Bailey gave no explanation of his lie.

Mr Bailey, with two other persons, motored to Lithgow early in April last and made a substantial offer of money to a woman if she would make a dastardly statement against the then Leader of the Labor Party to ruin his reputation privately and politically, and to drive him from public life. These three conspirators carried a typewriter, and dictated a statement to the woman, and procured her signature.

We do not pretend to have given an exhaustive account of Mr Bailey’s misdeeds, or to have fathomed the depths of his infamy, but the outline here presented discloses diabolical plotting to ruin adversaries.

The cumulative effect of the evidence has forced the Committee to express in definite terms its opinion that Mr Bailey, MLA, is a menace not only to the Labor Movement, but also to the body politic.

(Signed) AC Willis, Chairman,
D Rees, JF O’Reilly, G Smith, J Howie, Members of the Committee.

Appeals.

Several of those expelled upon the Committee’s report have already put in appeals against the verdict.

Eden-Monaro Inquiry.

The Committee reported that in the course of its inquiry information and allegations had been placed before it of grave malpractice in connection with the 1920 Eden-Monaro Federal Election. The Executive decided that the information and allegations should be forwarded to the proper public authority, with a request that a thorough investigation be made. It was also decided that the Executive would render all possible assistance in connection with the inquiry.

In this connection it is important to state that the Executive did not “lay charges”, as has been freely stated by interested persons. It would have been wrong for the Executive to suppress a document of the character made available to it, hence the request to the authorities to investigate. We propose to give Conference the fullest information on the matter.

Selection Ballot Committee’s Report.

Clause 1. The Committee at its first meeting decided to advertise in the Worker and, the Labor News calling upon any members of the Movement to come forward and give evidence relative to selection ballots.

Clause 2. The Committee adjourned for one month in order that all sections of the Movement may have an opportunity to submit material dealing with crook selection ballots.
Clause 3. The matter returned for the consideration of the Committee gave ample proof that irregularities occurred in a number of selection ballots, but no definite proof could be obtained to directly charge any persons or organisation with corruption. We regret our failure to sheet the corruption home, but this is due to the fact that there were so many interested parties concerned in the matter.

Clause 4. The laxity of the rules gave ample opportunity for any candidate desiring to obtain selection through illegal means. The keenness displayed in selection ballots caused many to find avenues that would ultimately give them the selection. If the rules had been more stringent they would have been more handicapped in carrying out their dishonest practices.

Clause 5. The Committee found that the majority of the “crook” work was done through the medium of forged union tickets and pence cards. There seems to have been no difficulty in forging and printing these trades union tickets and cards. It does seem strange to the Committee that no union whose cards or tickets were forged succeeded in finding out who were responsible for the printing of the faked union tickets and pence cards.

Clause 6. The use of the improper pence cards and union tickets had become so prevalent that it ended up in what was everybody’s business, was ultimately nobody’s business. The matter of selecting candidates in this corrupt manner was becoming of such proportion that even those who had introduced it were becoming afraid of their own frankenstein.

Clause 7. The upsetting of several selection ballots owing to the charge of corruption gave previous Executives ample opportunity to deal with this debasing and demoralising method of selection, but no direct action was taken to investigate the matter, with the result that it has eaten into the body politic as a cancer.

(Signed) JS. Garden, Mrs Fowler, H Denford, TC Holloway, J Howie, EC Magrath, – Murray, Members of Committee.

The Art Union.

In connection with the Art Unions run for the purpose of establishing an ALP Library with the proceeds, the Nationalist Attorney-General, Mr Bavin, launched an Equity suit against your Trustees. The 1920 Art Union resulted in a profit of £523/11/6, but the 1921 Art Union showed a loss of £91/13/11, reducing the total proceeds to £435/17/7. In May, 1922, in answer to a letter of inquiry as to the condition of the fund, the Under Secretary of Justice was informed by me that £200 had been loaned the Labor News at 5 per cent. £69/16/2 had been advanced to the ALP, £3/12/6 worth of books had been purchased, and £161/9/2 lay in the bank.
For the loans to the *Labor News* and the ALP, suit was commenced with the object *inter alia* of having your Trustees removed from their positions. The Judge in his summing up said:

“So far as the repayment of the monies improperly lent to the ALP and its newspaper are concerned, the uncontradicted evidence is that these monies have been repaid with interest. Seeing that it is sworn that the money has been replaced and that, therefore, there has been no loss, and seeing that there has been no charge of personal misappropriation, I should not take the extreme step of removing them from their trusteeship. I think that the case is a proper one in which to direct a reference to the Master to settle a scheme for the regulation and administration of the trust, and for the application of the capital and income belonging to it.”

The main legal point in the suit was whether the library was to be open to all members of the public, or restricted to bona fide members of the ALP. On this point we were entirely successful, and the library remains a valuable asset of the Party.

The best thanks of the ALP have been earned by Mr HV Evatt, who is honorary legal adviser to the Movement, and Mr Lamaro for valuable services as counsel on Labor’s behalf in this suit. The thanks of your Executive have been tendered to these gentlemen already.

*Members of the Communist Party.*

At last year’s Conference, careful consideration was given to the position of the Communist Party and members thereof, and the following rulings were given by the President:

A ruling was asked for on Rules 6 and 52 regarding a member of the ALP being a member of another political body.

Mr Willis said that Rule 52 read to the effect that no Labor candidate or member of the ALP should sign the undertaking of any group, organisation, or party.

Mr Willis: (Rule 52) “I say that it means that no member can sign the pledge of any other group or party. However, if they signed it before they became a member of the ALP technically they would be exempt”.

Mr Willis: (Rule 6) “The intention of Rule 6 is that, if you are a member of the ALP you cannot be a member pledged to any other political body. That is the spirit of it, and it is for Conference to decide the issue”.

Mr Howie: “On behalf of the members of the Communist Party in this Conference, I want to make this statement: That we have not come here without giving serious consideration to our actions. We have analysed the position from every viewpoint, and we realise by coming inside the Labor Party what we are doing. We want the right at all times to be able to take our seat at Conference and if defeated at this Conference, we will loyally abide by the decisions arrived at. We will come again at next Conference and will put our proposal again. If defeated on the second occasion we will accept your decision as final.”
Mr Willis: “I understand from that that you are conforming entirely to the policy and platform of the Labor Party. That is absolutely satisfactory for anyone.”

Ruling: I rule that all those who are in this Conference, and whose credentials have been accepted are entitled to remain in the Movement.

Question: Ask Mr Howie if he has resigned from the Communist Party?

Mr Willis: I know what is behind all this, and I want Conference to decide. Whatever Party they may have belonged to, when they consented to come in here they pledged themselves to abide by the decision, and carry out the policy of the ALP, and they automatically cease to be a separate party.

Mr Stewart: I want to know if the Communist Party are prepared to alter their Constitution into conformity with the ALP.

Mr Willis: My answer is that the Communist Constitution must conform to the ALP, otherwise they cannot be members.

Mr Baines: I desire to dissent from the President’s ruling on all Rules. He is camouflaging the ruling. I want to point out that Mr Willis has ruled that there can be two political parties.

Vice-President: Mr Chairman, dissent has been moved from your ruling.

Mr Willis: The mover of the motion of dissent said that I ruled that there could be two political parties. I have ruled nothing of the kind. I ruled that: Delegates who have been admitted to this Conference as members of the ALP, and I only know them as members of the ALP and whatever organisations they may belong to, their rules must conform to the Platform, Policy and Constitution of the ALP. Immediately they cease to conform to the Platform, Policy, and Rules they must cease to be members of the ALP.”

On being put to Conference, the motion of dissent was lost.

Mr O’Brien: Ask if Howie, Denford, and yourself are members of any other party.

Mr Willis: I am not going to ask anything of the kind. They cannot be members of any other distinct party as long as they are inside the Movement. The right of the Communists to affiliate with the ALP as a party was held over by last Conference for decision at the forthcoming Conference, it being understood that all Communists who joined the ALP were no longer members of an outside organisation.

Among the officers elected at last Conference were Mr J Howie to the Federal Executive, and Mr JS Garden to the State Executive.

These gentlemen raised in Executive meetings a demand that members of the Communist Party should have rights in the ALP equal to those of bona fide members, and should be protected against Labor criticism.
Mr Willis ruled that members of any other political party could not be members of the ALP. All members of the Executive were called upon to sign a declaration that they were not members of the Communist Party.

Messrs Garden and Howie refused to sign this declaration, and were consequently declared to be ineligible for membership:

Rules 2, 6, 24 and 52 should be read closely by members.

Rule 2: The Party shall consist of all persons who subscribe to the Objective, Platform, and Constitution of the ALP and conform thereto.

Rule 52: No Labor candidate, or member of the ALP shall sign the pledge or undertaking of any other group, organisation or party.

Rule 24: Delegates to the Annual Conference, or any Special Conference, shall not belong to any other political organisation or party, and shall be called upon before taking their seats at Conference to subscribe to the Platform and Constitution of the ALP.

Rule 6: Any member of an Affiliated Union who is a known member of any other political body shall not be entitled to the privileges of membership of the Labor Movement.

Entrusted with the administration of Rules as decisive as these, the Executive acted in the only way possible.

The Executive has since extended to branches the power to call upon all members to sign a similar declaration, under the following resolution:

“That the branches be advised that the Chairman shall upon being requested by one or more members, call upon all present to sign a declaration that they are not members of the Communist Party or any other outside the ALP.”

As is well known, delegates, in accordance with Rule 24, declare that they do “not belong to any other political organisation or party”. Mr Garden, who was consistently in attendance at last Conference as an alternate delegate, did not sign this pledge – a fact which the Executive was not acquainted with until discussion on this matter was entered upon. Mr Howie signed this pledge.

**Demand for Special Conference.**

A number of demands to call a Special Conference to deal with the Communist question were received by the Central Executive, but the senior vice-president, Mr EC Magrath, in the absence of Mr Willis, pointed out that among the appellants there were not 20 of the bodies competent under the Rules to demand a Conference. The requests came from branches of the ALP that were not electoral branches, and from sections of unions.
**Speaking Teams.**

A large gathering of Secretaries and Presidents of metropolitan branches sat in the Trades Hall on October 24, to consider the best means of coordinating.

The items on the business paper were: Speaking Teams, Speaking Classes, Lodger Vote, Annual Picnic, General Appeal, Enrolment, *Labor News*.

It was resolved that the Executive be requested to establish a speaking class to be conducted by someone to be appointed and to operate in conjunction with the ALP Organising Committee.

The maximum number of speakers in each team, it was decided, should be four, the Organising Committee to arrange the interchange of speaking teams and places, and dates of meetings.

A further meeting of Presidents and Secretaries took place at the Trades Hall on Wednesday, October 31.

The following recommendations were agreed to:

1. That the branches be written to and asked to organise classes where possible for the purpose of improving the members in the art of public speaking.

2. That the Executive appoint, say, six adjudicators to attend branches.

3. That the Committee requests the Executive to inaugurate a system of inter-branch debates, and to appoint a Committee representative of branches and unions for the purpose of conducting the debates on subjects of economic and political interest. The Executive to also arrange for adjudicators, and to provide trophies as prizes.

   That the debates be commenced as soon as possible.

   That it be a recommendation to the Executive that special articles be prepared and inserted in the *Labor News*.

   That the Electorate Councils be requested to undertake control of the debates, when the names of the teams have been furnished to the Executive.

   That it be a recommendation that all branches be urged to endeavor to increase the army of propagandists by providing opportunities for new speakers to become accustomed to addressing the public. Further, to appoint a local organising committee for the purpose of enrolling new members whilst meetings are in progress.

4. (8) That it be a recommendation to the Executive to inaugurate an Annual Picnic and that the Executive be requested to commence this work as soon as possible.

5. (9) That it be an instruction to the Executive to publish in the *Labor News* the names of every metropolitan branch and where they meet, and who the Secretary is.
That this meeting requests the Executive to place on the Agenda Paper at the next Conference notice to increase the fees by 1/ per member. That 1/ be for the fighting funds of the ALP.

That the Executive map out the whole of the boundaries of the metropolitan area and forward them on to the branches.

**Domain Meetings, and Sunday Night Propaganda Meetings in the Southern Cross Hall.**

The Executive instituted meetings in the Domain on Sunday afternoons, and in the Southern Cross Hall at night, and after a trial extending over several months, decided that the support given these meetings by the Movement, together with the cost of running the Southern Cross Hall meetings, did not warrant their retention and, therefore, decided to discontinue same for the time being.

**Meeting of Parliamentarians and Executive Members.**

Mr Willis in opening the inaugural meeting of the Executive members and Parliamentarians, said that it had been called for the purpose of general discussion with a view to bringing cohesion of all the forces of the Movement, and of developing a greater degree of active and efficient organisation and propaganda. He hoped this would be merely the commencement of a series of meetings of the kind as he felt that regular discussion would be of great value to the Party. The Platform and Policy of the Movement was not understood as it should be by the great mass of the people, and continuous effort was called for in order to place Labor’s cause as clearly as possible before the people. If this were done he believed success would be assured if every member of the Party would place his services at the disposal of the Committee.

Mr P Loughlin, Deputy Leader of the State Party, expressed hearty approval of the proposal to more actively expound the policy and programme of Labor, and said that he believed that the primary duty at present was to galvanise the Movement itself into a state of greater vigor and alertness. He believed that there were sufficient voters in the State who understood and were fully prepared to support Labor’s policy, if the organisation of the Movement were extended so that direct and constant appeal to and contact with them could be maintained.

Mr Charlton made an appeal for greater unity within the ranks of the Movement, and strongly urged the cessation of all controversy and certainly all condemnation through the public press.

The following comprise the Committees elected from the Conference:

**Organising.** — PE Coleman, MHR, M Flannery, MLA, G Smith.

**Objective Committee.** — E Riley (Snr), MHR, P Loughlin, MLA, JM Power, MLC, AC Willis.

**Industrial Committee.** — EC Riley (Jnr), MHR, G Cann, MLA, EC Magrath.
Banking, Finance and Insurance Committee.—W Mahoney, MHR, JT Lang, MLA, A Rutherford, Mrs L Fowler.

Rural Committee.—LL Cunningham, MHR, HP Lazzarini, MHR, A Mc-Clelland, MLA, TJ Swiney.

The Organising Committee met in conjunction with the Organising Committee of the ALP, which is representative of the State and Federal Parties and Executive and WCOC. One of the suggestions is to the effect that a State-wide campaign should be instituted. The idea is that a Federal and State member should visit different electorates for the purpose of addressing meetings and carrying out the organising work of forming branches and putting the Movement on a sound footing. The question of attending to metropolitan meetings was also considered.

The Industrial Committee submitted a comprehensive industrial programme and drew attention to the fact that in their report they had not mentioned various matters, such as immigration, rents and housing, although these were closely associated with industrial matters but might properly be relegated to a special committee.

After lengthy discussion it was decided that the various Committees would continue the work of drafting pamphlets dealing with the different phrases of the policy and platform of the Party.

The Labor Daily.

After many long years of waiting, the Movement has now been equipped with a morning daily newspaper, and the prospects of success in the political and industrial arena are enhanced by its arrival. In future contests we shall have at least one paper which will put Labor’s point of view to the reading public. There is no need to stress the advantages which will accrue to the Movement from a better understanding of Labor’s Policy. The economic welfare of the people is wrapped up in the realisation of that policy, and in the greater unity which will be won by its influence, the day of success will be drawn nearer.

The Labor Daily’s policy is that of the Australian Labor Party, and so stated in the Company’s Articles of Association. On the Directorate of the Company the ALP has Mr AC Willis, President, and Mr JT Lang, Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, and the Articles of Association provide for the continuance of such representation, subject to an election once each year.

The ownership of the paper rests with subscribing unions and bona fide Labor shareholders. These will exercise complete and unrestricted control over the policy and affairs of the Company. Whilst some shares are held by persons who invested in the Daily Mail, these shares, as a result of the bargain made when the purchase contract was entered into, carry no voting or other rights in the Labor Daily Company.

With the advent of the daily newspaper, the Labor News – the weekly spokesman of the Party – has ceased publication. Mr JM Power, Editor
and Manager, during the period in which he managed its affairs, improved its news and advertising value, and is entitled to the appreciation of the Movement for the generous and unselfish service rendered by him.

Proposal to Abolish Selection Ballots.

This has been a highly controversial subject in the Movement for some time, but particularly since the disclosures of corrupt practices in connection with selection ballots were made known. Your Executive has decided in favor of their retention. This decision was reached only after the fullest discussion had taken place. To abolish selection is an easy matter, but it is not easy to surround an “open go” with such safeguards as will make for cleaner politics. Believing that abolition would make confusion worse confounded the Executive favored the adoption of new rules which would incorporate the necessary conditions to protect the ballot, and in the proposed rules to be submitted to Conference important changes are proposed. Amongst other things, it is proposed to adopt a membership ticket which will be signed by the holder and which, like the butt thereof, will record important details. The General Secretary is to be entrusted with the compilation of a roll of membership which will be used in selection ballots. Union members who desire to participate in selection ballots must get a ticket of membership from a branch. The signature on each ticket and in the branch roll book must correspond before a ballot paper can be issued. Membership rolls will close when a Council decides to call for nominations, and only persons who have complied at that time with the conditions prescribed in the Rules will be eligible to vote. There are other changes which we think will eliminate the opportunity to do mischief.

New Rules.

The Committee entrusted with the revision of our Rules reported its work to the Executive, and it will come before Conference. In a large part the changes proposed affect selection ballots, but in addition a charge by which unions will pay a uniform affiliation fee of 6d per member is proposed in lieu of the 2d and 6d now paid in respect to affiliation under Rules 19 and 6 respectively.

The financial side of the Movement has been further considered and an increase is proposed in the price of membership tickets from 2/- to 3/- in the case of branch members, and from 1/- to 2/- in the case of union members who join a branch. Periodically each branch will furnish the butts of membership tickets to the General Secretary and an annual statement concerning the financial transactions of the branch.
The Necessity to Become Active.

There is reason to believe that the very unsatisfactory administration of the Fuller Government is rapidly reaching its end; and that a general election may take place much earlier than is commonly forecasted.

In that event there is urgent need for every member of the Movement, and every wellwisher outside, to be up and doing. Funds are required for organising purposes; and the work of bringing up branches to a maximum strength, and initiating an extensive organising campaign, must be speeded up without delay.

Above all, there is need for closing up the ranks; for composing any outstanding personal differences; and for the complete elimination of anything likely to lead to internecine strife, so that the work of the Movement may proceed smoothly and harmoniously to victory.

That Way Only Lies Success.

During the period your Executive has had control, confidence has been restored amongst the members, and with the public, and the increasing unity between the political and industrial sides of the Movement is further encouraging.

Recent political events in Great Britain and the Commonwealth give Labor renewed grounds for hope. The British Labour Government (the first in the history of the House of Commons), and its work, will be watched with the keenest interest and concern. Here in Australia signs are not wanting that the Party of the privileged classes has forfeited all claims to public recognition. In the Tory stronghold of Dalhousie, Victoria, a few days ago a Labor candidate captured the seat at a by-election.

In this State, Labor’s chances at the next election are more than good. The prospects of regaining the Treasury Benches are excellent if all work harmoniously and unitedly for the victory which is assuredly within our grasp.

Signed for and on behalf of the Executive,
AC Willis, President.
WJ Carey, General Secretary.

Annual Report Federal Parliamentary Party

That last session of the Federal Parliament was probably one of the most hotly contested sessions in the history of that institution. The Labor Party is exceptionally strong in debating strength, and with splendid cooperation and team work had the Government on tenterhooks. By sheer debating ability and [a phrase missing] the Labor Party were able to prevent many measures inimical to the interests of the people from becoming law. Among these were the Air Force Bill, which proposed where the Australian Act was silent that the British Air Force Act would
operate. Taking into consideration that the British Air Force Act has many clauses which would not be tolerated by Australians, and that this Act would be amended from time to time, and which would bind Australians to laws of which they had not a copy, the Party put up such a fight that the proposal was dropped. This also applied to an Amendment of the Defence Act last year. Notices of censure were moved with regard to many important matters, notably the sale of the Commonwealth Woollen Mills, the lack of policy of the Government with regard to the Australia, \[sic\] and the dangerous foreign policy laid down by the Prime Minister.

When the Commonwealth Shipping Bill was under consideration the Party proposed amendments which provided for a representative of the unions in the industry being appointed to the Board, preference to unionists, ships to be exclusively manned by Australians when practicable, and wages not to be less than those laid down by the Federal Arbitration Court. Also that all stores, provisions, gear, etc., should be purchased in Australia, but all these, unfortunately, were defeated by the Government, helped of course by the Country Party.

A very important declaration was made by the Leader, Mr M Charlton, during the session, and one which is fraught with such significance in view of the declarations of the war mongers in the Government, namely: The Labor Party’s Policy is to promote world peace, and consistently with Australia’s goodwill to her kindred overseas, declares its readiness to take full responsibility for Australia’s defence, but is opposed to the raising of troop forces for service outside the Commonwealth or promise of participation in any future overseas war except by decision of the people.

This is probably one of the most momentous declarations made for some years, inasmuch as it lays down definitely the considered opinion of the Australian Labor Party. It is very significant that the British Labor Party followed almost immediately with a declaration that war should not be declared without reference to the House of Commons. With such safeguards, and the elimination of secret diplomacy, wars would almost be impossible.

Unemployment and Immigration received the most serious consideration of the Party, and the Leader, Mr Charlton, moved the following resolutions:

Provision should first be made to absorb the unemployed at present in Australia.

Action should be taken to make available lands in close proximity to railways and markets, which would afford a reasonable prospect of success to settlers.

There should be proper supervision in Great Britain for selecting a suitable class of immigrant.

This was, as was to be expected, defeated by the Government, but its value still stands, as it is the Policy of the Labor Party.
The Party again made an attempt to increase Old Age and Invalid Pensions to £1 per week. This was defeated, but the efforts of the Party practically forced the Government to increase the pension from 15/- to 17/6. An attempt was also made to bring into operation a Widows and Orphans Pension, but this was defeated on a Party vote.

A strenuous fight was made by the Party against the remission of £1,330,000 to certain wealthy companies and squatters, in connection with the Labor Party’s Land Tax on Leaseholds. Eventually this was prevented by the Party, but only after a bitter fight. The Government was compelled to make a backdown on this matter.

The action of the Government in selling the Commonwealth Woollen Mills was one of the most disgraceful acts of the Government, and they have been many. By this act, the woollen manufacturers of Flinders Lane and York Street have been repaid a hundredfold for the money which they put into the National Party Funds. Woollens immediately rose in all States when this very questionable deal was consummated. To make matters worse the Mills were sold at less than half their value.

Another scandal exposed by the Labor Party was the reduction of taxation on foreign shipping companies. Under this reduction, foreign shipping interests have received a reduction of 68 per cent, and means a loss to Australia of over £100,000. This amount will have to be made up from the Australian taxpayers. It would be interesting to know the history of this reduction, and whom it affects. It might be mentioned that it is practically confined to shipping companies which are black labor boats.

A fight was made by the Party to increase the allowance under the Income Tax Act for children up to £60, and after some time the Government were reluctantly compelled to increase the amount from £40 to £50.

The Northern Territory Land Bill was introduced by the Government, and which practically meant the handing over of millions of acres to big pastoral interests for many years, but owing to the strenuous opposition of the Party, this Bill was discreetly dropped.

Everything looks exceptionally bright for the Federal Labor Party, and it is almost certain that the next election will see a Labor Government once more in power, to carry out Labor’s programme.

Arthur Blakeley,
Sec. Federal Parliamentary Labor Party

**Annual Report from State Parliamentary Labor Party.**

During the year 1923 the State Parliamentary Labor members have keenly watched the actions of the Government and strongly opposed any proposal deemed by us to be against the interests of the workers. As a result of this watchfulness the Government was defeated on several occasions. The Nationalist Party has undoubtedly lost the esteem of
many of its erstwhile enthusiastic advocates and indications are that it will be crushingly defeated on the next appeal to the electors.

During the last Session strong opposition was manifested by the Labor members of the House to the passage of the Bread Amendment Bill. This Act is the cause of the strike by the Operative Bakers.

We have had every opportunity for testing the Progressives. They do not appear to be averse to a fight with the Government, conditionally of course upon it being a sham fight. The Progressive Party has given the Government slavish support, and if there is any credit due to the Government the Progressives are entitled to share in it, and if – as there shall be – any punishment is to be meted out, then they must share in that also.

Many country people thought that by voting for the Progressives that they were registering a vote against the Nationalists. They now know that they were wrong, and we expect the great bulk of that vote will swing our way next elections.

The forthcoming Session should be intensely interesting, and if the Progressives want to save their faces, they can only do so by voting the Government out of office.

Robt E O’Halloran,
Sec. Parliamentary Labor Party.

Annual Report WCOC

The officers of the above Committee have much pleasure in presenting to you the yearly report for 1923. The year has been a particularly busy one. Although political questions claimed very little of our time, our social activities were many. This was due to the National Government being in power and the services of the WCOC being availed of in war outside the sphere of their usual work.

During the year many cases of poverty and distress, caused through unemployment, came to our notice, and were assisted.

The members of the WCOC of the ALP being the guardians of the working class, people organised and assisted to raise funds by special efforts and were able to distribute £61 in cash, besides a large quantity of clothing, amongst the distressed cases that came under notice.

The Committee also visited many mothers, and rendered valuable assistance in the nursing of and caring for the young children of mothers who were not able themselves to procure assistance.

The Lord Mayor’s Relief Committee also secured the services of our Committee. Mesdames Mainckie, Bodkin, Fox, Taylor, Mitchell, Acher-son, Sorrenson, Malley, and Miss Mitchell gave a good deal of their time to this work, spending several afternoons investigating cases and attending the sewing class.
We wish also to report that the Lord Mayor’s Bellbird Disaster Fund benefited to a large extent by the activities of the Women’s Committee. The following members, Mesdames Mainckie, Bodkin, Fox, Mitchell, Malley, Aitcherson, and Sorrenson, with the assistance of the whole Committee, helped to make the fund a gigantic success.

Bandmaster Parlington and a number of the WCOC organised a procession to the Domain where the bands rendered a musical programme. An appeal made by Messrs Willis, McKell, Ratcliffe, Stapleton, and Mrs Mainckie resulted in £58/6/2 being collected. This amount was substantially added to by a band concert by Mr Parlington at the Hippodrome on Sunday night. The collection realised £39/3/. Mr Wirth kindly donated the Hippodrome free.

A benefit was held at the Stadium, where our Committee rendered valuable assistance, and the Bellbird Fund benefitted to the extent of £800. Mr McKell, vice-president of the Fund, appreciated our efforts.

The Committee in closing their report, extend to the new officers for 1924 assurances of their cordial support. Should the opportunity arise for the Labor Party to put its case before the people, the WCOC will buckle on their armour and make the best fight possible. The unemployment and other social problems must be solved to ensure security and comfort for the workers, their wives and children. Only by the workers observing the axiom of “United we stand, divided we fall” shall we make progress.

At the Annual Social held last August a number of new and old friends met and exchanged fraternal greetings, spending an enjoyable evening.

The election of officers for the year 1924 resulted in the following being elected:

President. Mrs Fox; Hon. Secretary, Mrs E Bodkin; Treasurer, Miss S Mitchell; Vice-Presidents (4), Mesdames Mitchell, Mainckie, Malley, Scott; Auditors, Mrs A Sorrenson and Miss R Scott; Finance Committee, Mesdames Sorrenson, Aliman, Aitchison, Fortune, Roach, Gillfoils, Misses Day and Scott.

On behalf of the Committee,
Ellen Bodkin,
Hon. Secretary, WCOC

Report of the Municipal Labor Party

To the President and Members of the Executive,
The Australian Labor Party,
Trades Hall, Sydney.

Gentlemen:—

I have to submit for the information of the Executive and the rank and file of the Labor Movement generally a short resume of the activities of the Labor Party in the City Council since last Annual Conference.
As forecasted in our last report subsequent events have shown that the Labor aldermen adopted the correct course in supporting the present Lord Mayor, seeing that they had no chance of appointing a Labor man, and Alderman Gilpin was far preferable to any of the leading lights in the so-called Civic Reform Party.

Although the present Lord Mayor may not be all that is desired from a Labor standpoint, he is, to say the least, certainly more broadminded than any members of the autocratic section of the Reform Party. Furthermore, by assisting in bringing about his election we were still further widening the breach between the Breakaways and their former colleagues. In this connection it was realised that Labor interests had everything to gain by the adoption of this course, provided no departure was made from the platform to which we are bound.

It was soon apparent to the most casual observer that the regime of Alderman Gilpin was a contrast to the reign of vindictive persecution of the workers and class bias introduced by his predecessor.

Early in the year we set out to reverse some of Alderman McElhone’s high handed actions and were successful in having the Conciliation Committee reconstituted, though unfortunately we were unable to secure sufficient support from the anti-Labor element to have the 44-hour week restored. Although in a minority in the Council, by the exercise of tact we have been enabled to place on the records some very valuable measures, while on the other hand our vigilance has nipped in the bud several schemes which were undesirable from the standpoint of the best interests of the city.

The following are some of the items which claimed our attention:

Compensation to dependents of employees killed in the discharge of their duties. We endeavoured to have the compensation increased from £500 to £750 but were unsuccessful.

Interests of employees. In several instances we have been forced to fight to see that injustice is not done to employees, with satisfactory results. Notably in the Electricity Department in connection with the endeavour to victimise the Acting Power House Superintendent, an Australian with 16 years service and undoubted capacity for the position. Also the appointment of Assistant Workshop Superintendent where a recent importation received the appointment over the heads of Australians fully qualified and with extensive service.

City Surveyor. We endeavoured to secure the appointment of an Australian, but without success. As a result of our efforts, however, the proposed reorganisation of the City Surveyor’s Department was allowed to stand over until the new City Surveyor had time to go thoroughly into the question. His report is now available, and will receive the consideration it merits when the proper time arrives.
Road Materials. This matter has constantly been cropping up, and the party has pinned its faith to the modern method of road making as against wood blocks. This course was not followed until we had availed ourselves of the opinions of those best qualified to judge such an important question.

Enquiry into Electricity Supply Department by Messrs Smith & Johnson. The representatives on the Special Committee dealing with this subject gave the same very painstaking attention and several undesirable recommendations were deleted.

Enquiry into City Building Surveyor’s Department. Similar attention was paid to this report, but due to the fact that the people who made the report would not submit themselves to examination before the Committee we were successful in carrying a resolution that no further action be taken. Subsequently, on the recommendation of the Head of the Department, some of the principal recommendations were put into effect.

Flower Sellers’ Stands in Martin Place. A move was made to allot these only to returned soldiers, but as a result of our efforts arrangements were made to retain a good proportion of the old flower sellers who were not returned soldiers.

Motor Cycles. We advocated strongly the claims of an Australian machine, but were unsuccessful. However, we have used every effort to see that the Council gets the best article for the money involved.

Power Transformers. These remarks also apply here.

Power in Bulk from the Railway Commissioners. Your representatives fought strenuously to defeat this proposition, realising as they did that it made the way open to the absorption later on of the undertaking by a Commission. We endeavoured to have the Power House extended and such additional machinery installed as would permit of the Council generating its own current. The rest of the Council did not see eye to eye with us and entered into a contract with the Commissioners for 5 years’ supply.

Prices of Current. When the proposal was put forward to reduce the prices charged for electricity it was discovered that the proposal was to reduce the price of Power much below that of Lighting. We endeavoured to have a similar reduction made in each item, but were unfortunately outvoted.

Martin Place Extension. We fought strenuously to defeat this project unless the leasehold plank of our platform was given effect to. In the end we achieved our object, and this desirable improvement was decided upon. In this connection by our vigilance we defeated a move to give preferential treatment to one particular property owner in the area.

Children’s Playgrounds. Your representatives personally visited the various wards and selected sites for children’s playgrounds, but unfortunately, until the Council gets the necessary sanction by means of
the Amendment Act now before the Government, no move can be made in this direction.

Resumptions. With our assistance the Way’s Terrace, Pyrmont resumption was adopted and a decision arrived at by the Council to erect workmen’s dwellings thereon as well as on the Dowling Street and Brisbane Street resumed areas. As a result of a competition suitable dwellings have been decided upon.

System of Payment of Employees. Realising the severity of the system of fortnightly pay we set out to secure a return to weekly payment and were successful.

Salaries of Officers. These were satisfactorily dealt with by the Council.

General Staff. The Conciliation Committee adjusted the wages of the general staff in a manner which left little cause for complaint, under the circumstances, and in the above instances the increases were retrospective.

Appeals Against Dismissal. It having come to our knowledge that under the transfer of this power to the City Electrical Engineer employees were not getting the consideration of their cases to which they were justly entitled, the hearing of appeals was, as a result of our repeated representations, re-vested in the Town Clerk, from whom all employees may expect equitable treatment.

Town Clerk. Several times during the year the question of the retirement of the Town Clerk was under discussion and realising that the time was not far distant when, as a result of his age, the Town Clerk must retire, it was thought desirable to support the move to send the Deputy Town Clerk abroad to gain such experience as would fit him for consideration when the post became vacant. Your representatives were guided in this action by the fact that Mr Layton is an Australian born, and by past service, eligible for consideration when the choice is being made.

Strongroom Accommodation. This was urgently needed, the main question calling for our attention being that of installing the most modern appliances.

Blockboys and Messengers. By our persistent advocacy we were successful in having repealed the resolution which called for them automatically leaving the service when they reached the age of 18 years.

Employment Generally. We endeavoured to carry a resolution to the effect that employees within the city should have first preference for all vacancies in the service but our forces were not strong enough.

Goulburn Street. At our suggestion the Council decided to widen and improve this street on the southern side from Elizabeth Street to Dixon Street with direct communication through to Harris Street. In our opinion this would then be a very fine East to West thoroughfare which would be readily availed of by vehicular traffic.
Remodelling of Wards. We strongly opposed any action in this direction until such time as the adjacent Municipalities were absorbed. This must come in the very near future.

Lavatory Accommodation at Town Hall. We strongly supported the proposal to provide additional lavatory accommodation for ladies at the Town Hall.

Franchise. This is one of the objectionable features of the Bill now in the hands of the Government. The present proposal if carried into law will mean the abolition of the lodger vote. We tried to introduce the adult franchise, but without effect. However, from present indications the Government is very chary about interfering with the liberty of the people by passing into law such a class biased piece of legislation.

Right of Aldermen to Trade with the Council. This was one of the methods of reform required by some of our opponents but we had it deleted from the draft bill.

Injury to Employees. We were successful in inducing our opponents to support our proposal that the holidays or privileges of such employees should not be prejudiced.

Park Street Widening. We voted against this improvement, sticking out for the leasehold principle, but were outvoted.

Expert to Investigate Electricity Department. To ensure that the undertaking was conducted in the best interests of the ratepayers from a professional and technical standpoint we were successful in inducing Council to agree to the appointment of an expert to advise thereon. He will shortly be appointed and the result of his enquiries will be forthcoming in our next report.

Consultation with Tenderers. It having come to the knowledge of some members of our Party that contractors to the Council for Electrical appliances, etc., were in the habit of adding to their contract price a sum mutually agreed beforehand which sum was to be divided amongst the unsuccessful tenderers; after repeated efforts the information supplied was such as to force the Council to order an investigation of the matter. This is now under way. Startling disclosures have been made and admitted by the firms involved who, however, have attempted to justify their action, but quite a different complexion will be thrown on the matter before the enquiry has closed.

One of the worst measures brought into being by Alderman McElhone and his so-called Reformers, was that which declared it undesirable for an employee of the Council, whether entitled to a vote or otherwise, taking part in any canvassing or advocating the claim of any candidate for election as an Alderman.

We made every effort to have this interference with the rights of citizens removed, but without avail. However, it is deemed but right at this stage to state that we have lost no opportunity to impress upon our supporters that the motion is only bluff and on the contrary to relaxing
their efforts, we are sure a taste of “Civic Reform” will make a certainty that it will take more than a mock cry of “Patriotism” and the worn-out sectarian dope to entice them to vote against their convictions and their own personal interests.

It behoves the rank and file of the Movement and lodgers generally to rise to the occasion, get on the roll and sweep to oblivion the party which was bold enough to try and rob them of their just due.

In conclusion, we venture to suggest that we have done exceptionally well under the circumstances and by accentuating the breach between the Civic Reform Aldermen and the Breakaways hope to see out the term of the Council without any further harassing of the workers.

We cannot but direct attention to the actions of Alderman Courtenay since his entry into the Council, and if ever a party was justified in ridding itself of a masquerader, three years experience of Alderman Courtenay has justified the action of the Australian Labor Party.

In the Council today there is no more bitter opponent of the worker than he is. He is never satisfied unless he is trying to filch away from the worker either wages or privileges. His actions in this direction lead one to suggest that while he was a member of the Labor Movement he was “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”.

He does not possess the confidence of any section of the Council, and if the workers, and those who look forward to clean Civic Government fail to give him his quietus at the general elections in December next they will rue the day. Yours fraternally, for the Municipal Labor Party.

PV Stokes, General Secretary. Town Hall. Sydney, 27th March, 1924.

[The Balance Sheet of the NSW ALP is not reproduced here.]
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1924
(The Sydney Morning Herald – 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1924)

Day 1, Friday, 18 April 1924

Labor Conference. Riotous Scene. Crowd Breaks Into the Hall

The Communist Question
A riotous scene marked the afternoon session of the ALP Conference, which commenced its sittings at the Trades Hall yesterday. Forcing an entry into the Conference hall, from which they had been excluded owing to the inadequacy of the accommodation, a crowd temporarily took control of the gathering out of the hands of the president and delegates, and the Conference had to be adjourned till the evening.

The election of the credentials committee resulted in the return of all the members of the previous year’s committee, and the supporters of the present Executive also secured a straight-out victory in the election of the agenda committee, which decides the order of the business of the Conference.

The Attendance
The Conference was attended by delegates from all parts of the State, numbering over 300, and the accommodation in the largest hall in the Trades Hall was fully taxed. The president (Mr AC Willis) was in the chair.

It was decided to admit representatives of the press.

The Communists
Before being supplied with their admission badges all delegates were called upon to sign the following pledge: “I, the undersigned, hereby accept the platform and constitution of the Australian Labor Party, and declare that I am not a member of any other political organisation, group, or party, and I further declare that I am not a member of the Communist Party.”

All delegates signed the pledge except Messrs JS Garden (Clerical Association), J Howie (Coopers’ Union), and R Denford (Ironworkers’ Assistants’ Union), who are members of the Communist Party.

The credentials committee declined to issue voting badges to the persons elected by these unions as alternate delegates, but the decision of
the committee was reversed by a vote of the Conference, which decided to admit these alternate delegates until the rights of members of the Communist party had been determined by the Conference.

**Election of Officers**

Senator Grant was elected minute secretary to the Conference, defeating Mr A Tonge (North Sydney) for the position. Mr J McGarry (Executive) was elected timekeeper.

There was considerable discussion on clause 10 of the standing orders, which read: “Nominations of officers and Executive committee shall be received until 9 pm on Tuesday April 22; ballot papers to be issued at 8 pm on Thursday, April 24, and the ballot to close at 10 pm on Friday, April 25.”

Mr Arthur Blakeley, MP (AWU) moved as an amendment: “That nominations of officers and Executive committee close at 9 pm on Saturday April 19, and the ballot be open from 2 pm to 11 pm on Tuesday, April 22.”

Mr EC O’Dea (Shop Assistants’ Union) moved a further amendment to provide that nominations should close at 9 pm on Monday April 21, and the ballot be taken on Wednesday, April 23. He contended that the election should not take place until the Conference had decided whether certain persons at present outside the movement had the right to vote.

Miss A Golding (Women Workers) moved as a further amendment that the clause dealing with the closing of nominations and the taking of the ballot be deferred “until the matter of the expelled members was cleared up”.

The president: That may be a year.

Other delegates advocated a postponement of the ballot until a later stage in the Conference’s proceedings.

Upon the vote being taken Mr Blakeley’s amendment was lost, 121 voting against it and 116 in favour. Mr O’Dea’s amendment was then carried by 154 votes to 91. Other amendments of the clause proposed were not proceeded with, and the standing orders were adopted without any other important amendments.

**Admission of Public**

During the morning Miss A Golding and several other delegates proposed that members of the public (who could be heard outside loudly clamouring for admittance) be admitted to the back of the hall, but as other business was under consideration at the time, the president informed the movers that they were not in order at that stage.

In the afternoon the president stated that as there was no room in the hall for the accommodation of the public, the doors had been kept closed.
against them. If it was the wish of the Conference that the public be admitted, a motion could be carried instructing the Executive to endeav-our to obtain a larger hall elsewhere, and it would be done. In the meantime he suggested that a number of members of the Women Workers’ Union who were outside should be admitted.

A motion was immediately moved and carried, instructing the Executive to endeavour to obtain a larger hall, and the women were admitted.

Mob Takes Charge

Meanwhile a crowd of men, which had assumed considerable proportions in Dixon Street, continued their demand for admittance by banging angrily at the closed doors. Finding their efforts there were unavailing, they decided to force an entry by the glass panelled swing doors in the hall by which the delegates were admitted.

The Conference was quietly discussing the appointment of a credentials committee, when, suddenly, the impatient crowd surged through the doors into its midst. The two doorkeepers endeavoured to force them back, and were assisted by delegates who rushed to their aid.

Complete uproar followed, while the opposing forces, angrily shouting, pushing, and jostling, became a tangled mass of uncontrolled humanity. Women rushed to the platform to avoid injury, and a blind delegate and several others who were cripples were hurriedly assisted to a safe distance from the fighting mob.

The united strength of the invading crowd proved too much for the delegates, and the mob took charge. “The Red Flag” was lustily sung, while a man seated in the middle of the hall produced a red banner and waved it proudly in the air.

A number of delegates remained standing during the singing of “The Red Flag,” and some of them joined in it, while others expressed their disapproval by remaining seated, and there was some hooting.

Jumping to the platform, one of those who had forced an entry to the hall addressed the gathering. He was not known to the delegates, and his name could not be ascertained. All they wanted, he said, was to be admitted to hear what was being done. They did not desire to interrupt the proceedings of the Conference. Though the speaker shouted, his remarks were barely audible above the uproar.

Mr George Bodkin (AWU) stood beside the speaker on the platform.

The president (Mr Willis) then addressed the gathering. He was subjected to considerable hooting, but was applauded by a section of the delegates.

“This was not at all unexpected”, said Mr Willis. “We all know that Bodkin and Bailey and his crowd have organised this, but we have the press present, and they can see what has been done. These people have
been led to believe there was an attempt to keep them out of the Conference.”

Voices: So there was.

Mr Willis: In view of what has taken place, I declare the Conference adjourned until 7 o’clock this evening.

Further uproar followed, but after a few minutes the crowd divided into detached groups, which excitedly discussed the position for some time, but finally left the building.

Explanations

Mr George Bodkin (AWU) subsequently informed a Herald representative that when the crowd forced its way into the hall he was sitting near the platform inside. He had just previously gone outside to assist an old woman of 60 into the hall.

Mr Geo Buckland (secretary of the Central branch of the AWU) also made a statement to a Herald representative subsequently. “The attempt by Mr Willis to implicate the AWU or its officials in what took place”, said Mr Buckland, “is a damnable lie. The association of Mr Bailey’s name with it is for the purpose of further trying to discredit him. Mr Bailey was not near the Conference hall. Ten minutes before the trouble in the hall I was speaking to him on the telephone and he was then at his home at Stanmore.”

No one was seriously injured during the affray, but some of the delegates were suffering afterwards from the result of kicks, to which, they stated, they had been subjected by the intruders.

Evening Session

Several uniformed members were on duty outside the hall in the evening, but it was not necessary for their services to be called upon.

A crowd of about 200 people, including several women, waited outside the building until an hour after the Conference assembled. At that stage, one of the rear doors of the Conference hall having been opened for some purpose, the crowd seized its opportunity and rushed into the rear of the hall. After taking up their position they maintained silence, and no attempt was made to eject them.

Upon the resumption of business Mr Bodkin (AWU) asked permission to make a personal explanation in reference to the “afternoon outburst”. This was refused by the Conference, no motion to give permission being forthcoming.
Credentials Committee

The Conference proceeded to deal with the election of a credentials committee, which had been interrupted by the afternoon’s demonstration. Considerable excitement prevailed, and the business was delayed by a number of protests and points of order.

Mr J McGarry (Executive) moved that the committee appointed by the last Conference should act for this Conference, pointing out that this procedure had been followed in recent years. This committee consisted of Messrs F Conroy, P Stokes, and J Tyrrell.

Miss Annie Golding moved that nominations should be called, and nominated Messrs O'Dea, Graves, and Rowland.

Mr Kelly: Are the members of the old committee parties to any dispute coming before the Conference?

The president: I have no knowledge that they are parties to any dispute.

Voices: Quibble.

The voting resulted in Messrs Conroy, Stokes, and Tyrrell being elected by 159 votes to 116.

Elections

The voting for the five positions on the agenda committee was as follows: EC Magrath (Printing Trades’ Employees), 165; JF O’Reilly (Hairdressers), 164; J O’Brien (Painters), 159; AA Rutherford (Saddlery Trades), 159; A Blakeley (AWU), 154. The defeated candidates were: JA Beasley (Electrical Trades), 121; G King (Botany ALP), 117; Eldrige (North Shore ALP), 114; TP Holloway (AWU) 114; R Beashal (Miscellaneous Workers), 108.

There were two nominations for the position of returning officer, namely, Peter Connolly (Newcastle ALP) and WA Gibbs (assistant secretary ALP). The latter was elected by 161 votes to 119.

Messrs HP Lazzarini, MLA (157) and Walker (153) were elected to act as scrutineers, defeating Messrs Clark, MLA (118) and Sheridan (Colliery Employees, Northern) (124).

Reprieve of Williams

It was unanimously resolved that a deputation from the Conference should wait upon the Prime Minister (Mr Bruce) on Tuesday morning to urge the reprieve of Williams, the Paddington murderer.
Order of Business

Mr EC Magrath reported that the agenda committee had considered the order in which the first matter on the agenda should be dealt with. The committee recommended that the order of business should be: (1) Ballot box committee’s report and appeals of expelled members arising therefrom; (2) the Communists; (3) proposed new rules.

Mr Sheridan protested against the order of business as recommended, and moved that the consideration of the position of the Communists should be taken first, as the credentials of the delegates were being held up.

The President said that only three persons were affected and that the unions which had deputed them were represented by other delegates.

The matter of the ballot box appeals was more important.

Mr Sheridan: Have the rules been changed since the last Conference to enable the credentials committee to meet delegates outside?

The President: The rules are very explicit, that no member of another political organisation can be a delegate to the Conference.

Mr Sheridan: I say that these delegates are being gagged, and as I represent 14,000 of the northern men I protest against them being gagged. You have changed the rules to suit yourselves.

The President: There are not three appeals but a dozen, and each thinks that his case should have precedence. There is no reason why the Communists should take precedence over the four or five who were members of the movement. It is a matter for the Conference.

Mr Roels (Engine-drivers and Firemen) moved, “That the Conference consider the case of credentialed delegates sent to the Conference who were debarred admittance to the Conference, and debarred consideration by the credentials committee up to the present stage”.

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers’ Union) seconded the amendment, so that the Communists’ case could be considered first.

The Ballot Box Case

Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants): Before I vote on this matter, Mr President, I want to know if the committee’s reports are the only evidence on the ballot box matter that is going to be submitted to the Conference.

The President: In dealing with the ballot box question, the evidence upon which we arrived at our conclusions will be here. The whole lot can be read if it is desired by the Conference.

Mr O’Dea: Can each delegate be supplied with it?

Cries of “Oh! What about the expenses?”

Mr O’Dea: Never mind the expense. There are men who have been placed outside this movement paying the expense of their lives.
Mr J Mostyn (Electrical Trades Union) said the Communists were entitled to the first consideration.

The motion, “That the case of the Communists be considered first”, was declared lost on the voices.

The President then inquired if the persons concerned in the ballot box cases were in the vicinity of the hall. He understood they were.

Mr Holloway (AWU) said the persons concerned should be notified when to attend. They should not be expected to be there at a moment’s notice. He had never heard of such treatment.

The President: If they are not here now, then I suggest that they be notified to attend, and that we proceed with their business tomorrow.

Mr JF O'Reilly (member of the ballot box committee): In order that the parties concerned in the ballot box disclosures may have every opportunity of stating their cases, and so that no question of unfairness can be raised against us, I move, “That this business be taken as the first business tomorrow night”.

The President: I think that is perfectly fair. Frankly, I am not prepared to go on without them.

The motion was carried.

Mr O'Dea moved “That each of the expelled members be supplied with a copy of the evidence on which he was expelled”.

The president replied that all the evidence upon which the ballot box committee had arrived at its conclusions was in the form of sworn declarations, all of which would be placed before the Conference. Every one of the parties concerned knew absolutely the evidence upon which they had been condemned.

Alderman Bramston (expelled member who had just entered the hall): “That’s not true. That is a lie.”

Mr O'Dea’s motion was not proceeded with.

The Communists

Conference eventually carried a resolution that the case of the Communists should be taken first. Messrs Garden, Howie, and Denford then entered the hall, each receiving loud applause.

Mr EC Magrath moved the adoption of the portion of the Executive’s report dealing with the withdrawal of Messrs Garden and Howie from the Executive, after the Communistic controversy. He said that the rules of the movement were very explicit in regard to the position, that anyone subscribing to the platform of the ALP must give it their full allegiance, and that delegates to the Conference must sign a pledge to this effect. (Cheers) Mr Howie had signed this pledge, and Mr Garden had not, the latter being a fact of which the Conference and the Executive were not aware.
Under rules 2, 52, 24, and 6 the position was set forth in such manner that made it imperative for the Executive, after consideration, to insist that Messrs Howie and Garden should withdraw from one organisation or the other.

The ALP was wide enough to embrace all lines of thought, and anyone subscribing to its platform was not required to think in any particular way. (Cheers) Members might belong to the left or the centre or the right, but the ALP was the main party and none of its members could give allegiance to any sectional party.

The Executive had been uniform and consistent in the application of the rules during the nine months since its election. (Hoots and applause) The attitude of Mr Miller and the spirit of the Conference that elected Messrs Garden and Howie to the Executive, was that all sections should sink their differences and work together.

The one question for the Conference to consider was whether the Executive had or had not applied the rules of the movement, and, although the Conference might change the rules, it must consider the position in view of the rules as at present.

Mr R Stapleton (Paddington) supported the adoption of the report. He said that Conference should consider the rules and the application of them only, and not confuse the issue.

It was then decided that Messrs Denford, Howie, and Garden should be heard.

Mr R Denford said he was appealing to the Conference against the expulsion of members of the Communist Party, on the ground that the last ALP Conference had given him and other members of the Communist party the right to remain members of the Labour movement. He claimed that until that decision was rescinded by another Conference, which was the highest body in the movement, no one had the right to prevent him remaining in the Labour movement so long as he was a member of a trades union. He claimed that the ALP Executive, in face of the Conference’s decision, was wrong in carrying a resolution that placed him outside the movement. He quoted the resolutions advocating a “united front” carried at the All-Australian Trades Union Congress held at Melbourne in June, 1921, and at the Interstate Labour Party Conference held at Brisbane in October, 1921, and at the All-Australian Trades Union Congress held at Melbourne in June, 1922, which he contended were reasons in favour of the admission of Communists. The right to come back into the Labour party had, he said, been given to Mr Willis himself and others, who had been expelled in 1919. The Conference had, last year, given them that right, and he challenged any member to show where he had not worked in the interests of the working class movement. He protested against the ALP Executive, through the credentials committee, having altered the pledge the delegates to the Conference were required to sign. He contended they
had no authority for their action. The ALP Executive had created the Industrial Christian Fellowship – an organisation outside the Labour movement – (cries and dissent) – and Mr Magrath had himself said there was room in the movement for all, and yet they had put members of the Communist party outside the movement. (Cheers and dissent)

Mr Garden, in appealing to the Conference, said he proposed to deal with the historical facts of his case. Prior to his entering the previous year’s ALP Conference he had gone before the credentials committee appointed by the Federal Executive, consisting of Messrs A Stewart (Federal secretary), Rowlands, and Tyrrell. That committee had told him they knew he was a member of the Communist party, and had allowed him to enter Conference. He had sat at that Conference, and that Conference knew also that he was a member of the Communist party, and allowed him to remain, and elected him to the Executive. During the time he had been a member of the ALP Executive he had, he claimed, worked in the best interests of the Labour party. He claimed that he had been the medium whereby more money had come into the ALP than had come through the efforts of any member of the finance committee. He had been appointed while on the Executive a member of a committee whose duty it was to be to help clean up the movement. The first branch he had visited had been Surry Hills, and after examining that branch’s books he had cut down its membership from 1345 to 210. (Applause) That was only one branch. He had also visited others. Then Messrs Lang and Loughlin had raised the point that “Garden should get out”. The previous year’s Conference had decided that Mr Willis himself and others should be allowed to come inside the movement, and the question to be decided was whether it was right for him to have been expelled after Conference, which was master of its own business, and which had known that he was a member of the Communist party. There had been no charge that he had violated any decision of Conference, and he defied anyone to show that he had done so. He had gone into the Labour movement to help the movement, to give it new energy and new life, and to give it back its lost soul. (Cheers and dissent)

Mr Howie replied to a statement by Mr Stapleton, to the effect that if the Conference re-admitted the Communists the movement would be broken and smashed to pieces.

Mr Stapleton: If you smash your rules it will be. (Cheers)

Under the capitalistic system, Mr Howie continued, circumstances decided who would be the delegates to the Conference. Whether the Conference admitted him or not, he would be prepared to wait, true to his beliefs as a Communist, one year, or as long as it may be. Conditions would ultimately decide whether he entered the movement, and not the Conference delegates as individuals. In speaking of the representations made to the Executive in regard to the press propaganda of Messrs Lang and Loughlin, Mr Howie was subjected to much interruption.
The question at issue, he said, was what constituted a political party. The Victorian branch of the ALP had ruled that it was an organisation that sent candidates for public positions. In Brisbane the Communists were functioning in the Labour party. In South Australia they were members of the Executive, and in Western Australia they worked in harmony with the Labour movement. In Great Britain, also, they were admitted to the Labour party, and in all these cases Labour had strengthened its position. The Labour party in NSW at present was coming through a reaction. But when Labour comes into power in the State it will be found that 90 per cent of the delegates to the Conference will be Communists.

At the close of Mr Howie’s address at 10.30 pm the Conference adjourned till 9.30 this morning.

**Day 2, Saturday, 19 April 1924**

**Claims of Communists. Affiliation Proposal Rejected**

**Ballot Box Appeals**

After further considering the appeals of Messrs Denford, Garden, and Howie, against their exclusion from the Labour Party, on account of their membership of the Communist Party, the ALP Conference, on Saturday morning, by 154 votes to 102, endorsed the ruling given by Mr Willis (and upheld by the Executive), that members of the Communist Party cannot also be members of the ALP.

A proposal “that all parties that are prepared to accept the ALP platform be allowed affiliation”, was defeated by the Conference after a vigorous debate on the aims and ambitions of the Communist party. The voting was 104 in favour, and 160 against.

Subsequently, by 131 votes to 118, the Conference decided to appoint a committee to investigate the position, with a view to consolidation.

The ballot box scandal engaged the attention of the Conference throughout the evening and was still under consideration when the adjournment took place.

**Animated Debates**

The president of the NSW ALP Executive (Mr AC Willis) presided at the morning and afternoon sessions of the Conference.

When business was resumed on Saturday morning several delegates protested against the manner in which the official organ of the ALP had reported the previous day’s proceedings, one member recommending
that the board of the paper should be called together to review the position.

The president said that he had not yet carefully read the report, but would give it the consideration of himself and the board.

It was moved by another delegate: “That on account of its fair and just report of the proceedings, the Sydney Morning Herald be the only newspaper admitted to the future sessions of the Conference.”

The president said that he could not take the motion.

Mr W Gibbs (assistant secretary) announced that the efforts to obtain a larger hall had so far been fruitless, but that further efforts were being made.

The Communists

The debate on the Executive report dealing with the decision of the ALP Executive that members of the Communist party could not also be members of the ALP was continued.

Mr CE Martin (Cootamundra Electorate Council) and Mrs Melville (Eastern Suburbs) supported the motion.

Mr Falkingham (Boilmakers), in opposing the motion for the adoption of the report, censured Parliamentary members and the Executive.

The president at this stage directed attention to the point at issue. He said that personal feelings and irrelevancies should be put aside. The rules, which could only be changed by a two-thirds majority of the Conference, were in plain English, and he would rule that they meant what they said. He wanted to see Messrs Howie, Garden, and Denford, and others in the movement, but on the same conditions as those on which he was in it. (Loud applause) He suggested a small committee to concentrate on the facts of the case in relation to the rules, and to endeavour to find a solution. No movement could accept a party within itself, which was liable to receive direction from another source.

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA, made a vigorous appeal for unity. There were, he said, two distinct parties, one about 150 strong, and the other about 110 strong, in the Conference. They were losing sight of the working class policy, which was their main duty, and wrapping it up in useless shibboleths.

Mr O Connell (St George) and Mr E Cohen (St George) supported the motion.

Mr J Beasley (Electrical Trades) said that he took into consideration only the spirit of the last Conference, which admitted Messrs Garden and Howie for what they were then worth at least.

Mr G Thompson (Western Suburbs) attacked the Executive action and characterised the procedure as corrupt.
Mr Mills (Wharf Labourers’ Union and a member of the ALP Executive), in defending the report, said that the question was merely whether the Executive had been right in its administration of the rules.

A motion “that the question be now put” was moved at this stage, and was carried by 133 votes to 115.

Mr Garden was allowed to make a statement on the constitutional aspect of the case. He had, he said, not disagreed with the rulings of the chairman, because they were correct. But the constitution laid down that members must not owe allegiance to any other political party. From his point of view the political party was the mass party of the movement that sent candidates for political positions. He was prepared to sign the pledge that he did not belong to any other political party. But he would not, and should not be required to sign a pledge that he was not a member of the Communist party. His contention was that the Communist party was a political party, but not a political party within the meaning of the constitution of the ALP.

The Vote Taken

The motion of the adoption of the portion of the Executive’s annual report referring to members of the Communist party was then put to the Conference, and was carried on a division, the voting being 154 in favour and 102 against.

The ruling given last year by Mr Willis and endorsed by the State Executive that members of the Communist party cannot also be members of the Australian Labour party was thus endorsed by the Conference.

Affiliation Proposal

The whole of the afternoon session of the Conference was occupied by a stormy debate upon the following resolution, moving by Mr A Myles (Amalgamated Engineering Union) on behalf of his organisation: “That all parties that are prepared to accept the ALP platform be allowed affiliation”.

Mr Myles, speaking to his motion, contended that the union he represented was a State political organisation working inside the union, but part and parcel of the union. He contended that the interpretation that some people put upon the pledge which members of the ALP were required to sign, stating that they were not members of any other political organisation, was not a sincere one. When the pledge was first put into the rules of the ALP it was [not?] intended that it should apply to working-class organisations.

Mr W Wolstonholme, (Amalgamated Engineers), who seconded the motion, asserted that it would only be a little time before the trades unions would dominate the Labour movement. (Applause and dissent)
Mr Arthur Blakeley, MP (AWU), in a vigorous speech, strongly opposed the motion. It was, he said, a question of whether the dog was going to wag the tail, or whether the tail was going to wag the dog. (Applause) Immediately the ALP joined together with other parties as was proposed, in an attempt to form a united front, they would die of dry rot. (Cries of “Oh”) How many working class parties were there that desired to affiliate with the ALP?

Delegates: One.

Mr Blakeley: Yes. And only one – the Communist party.

Dictation from Russia

Proceeding, Mr Blakeley said they should compare the constitutions of the two parties. The constitution of the ALP was national, while that of the Communist party was international, and being international, it could not be accepted by Australia (dissent and applause). Fifty-three countries of the world had been represented at Moscow in the drawing up of the platform of the Communist party, and that platform could not possibly be accepted by Australians. Protection was one of the planks of the Labour party, and not of the Communist party. Australia (if the Communist platform was adopted), must open her doors to the people of all countries. Those peoples had different ideals, different mentality, and a different psychology, which was as an unbridgeable chasm, separating them from Australia. Just as he did not want to interfere in the management of Russia, so he did not want the Russians to interfere in the management of Australia. (Cheers)

“The other day”, Mr Blakeley continued, “you sent a deputation to the Government to ask for the reprieve of a murderer. Yet in Russia, the Communist party advocates the execution of political offenders, and every week in Russia, enemies of the Soviet Government are executed. The Communist party does not advocate the abolition of capital punishment.”

Proceeding, Mr Blakeley said that they must first of all be loyal to the Australian Labour movement, and if they remained loyal to the Communist party they could not be loyal to the Australian Labour party. (Cheers and dissent)

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers’ Union) asked where they would be if they relied for all that they knew about the world’s working class movement upon men like Mr Blakeley? Where could they get to unless they learned about what the working classes were doing in other parts of the world. He was not a member of the Communist party, and he did not represent Russia.


Mr Falkingham: Well, that’s the place you fought for. (Uproar)
“The reason I am here today, retorted Mr Falkingham, “is that I was born here, and if I had my way about it I would give the country to the Germans, and apologise for the state it is in. (Uproar) These are the people you put into Parliament to represent you, and to get for you your platform – socialisation of industry. Are you likely to get it by men of that calibre? We must have in our party a party of propaganda that will reach the men in the shops.”

Mr J McGarry (member ALP Executive) opposed the motion. If the Communist party was allowed to affiliate with the ALP, they would simply come in with the idea of getting control of that body.

Delegate: And quite right, too. Why not?

Mr McGarry said the position would be that they would have inside the Labour movement a body well organised, and consistently fighting to get control of the movement. Those already in the movement would organise too, and fight to prevent it, and then the movement would be divided into two camps. They could not have a united front where you have two parties fighting for control.

Mr Kilburn (Bricklayers’ Union) vigorously attacked the views expressed by Mr Blakeley. The questions that had to be answered, he said, were: “Is Australia a part of the world or not?” “Can she live unto herself alone?” If Australia was to live unto herself alone, why had they decided a few years back they would fight the workers of other parts of the world. Where was Mr Blakeley then? “The last man and the last shilling” in a quarrel that was not Australia’s had been the cry then, and Mr Blakeley had said, “We will draw men from the farthest corners of the State”. When Australia wanted advice concerning mines, regulations, workers’ compensation, or local government, she went to other parts of the world to get it. We had a glorified State Parliament, a costly institution, to do the things that in Germany were done by the people themselves. What of Australia’s fiscal policy, her naval policy, her policy for the army, her social policy? All modelled in Downing-street. The whole position was that try as she might as a portion of the British Empire, Australia was bound hand and foot to Downing-street. She was in the pawnshop of Great Britain.

Mr Mark Gosling, MLA, said there had been a lot of misrepresentation as to the position of the British Labour Party and the Communist Party. As one who had sat through the whole of the Conference held in London the previous year, he could tell them the facts. There had been present at the Conference 900 delegates, representing over three million people. The question of affiliation was moved, and was defeated, the voting being 366,000 in favour of affiliation, and 2,880,000 against (Cheers). He opposed the motion.
The Vote Taken
Upon a division being taken, the motion was defeated, the voting being 104 in favour and 160 against.

Committee to Report
Mr JM Baddeley, MLA (Miners) then moved, and Mr Kilburn seconded: “That this Conference, having in view the importance of consolidating the movement and presenting a united working class front, appoint a committee of five members, two representing the views expressed by the ALP Executive and two to represent the Communists’ views, with an independent chairman to investigate the position fully and submit a report to Conference, with a view to consolidating this movement”.
The motion was carried, on a division, by 131 votes to 118.
Mr Baddeley nominated Messrs Beasley and Kilburn as members of the committee to represent the Communists, and Mr O’Reilly nominated Messrs Magrath and Blakeley to represent the ALP, and these nominations were endorsed by the Conference.
It was decided that the committee should select a chairman, but that if the committee was unable to agree on the matter the appointment should be made by the Conference.

Barrier Reinstatements
Mr Donald Grant raised the question of the admission to the full rights and privileges of membership of the members of the Barrier (Broken Hill) unions involved in the 1919 breakaway. He asked whether the ruling previously given by the president on the decision of the All-Australian Congress on the point applied to himself personally.
The president ruled that all the Barrier members were readmitted by the decision with full rights and privileges if they had complied with the conditions laid down. If there were charges against Mr Grant they must be laid in the proper way.

Ballot Box Scandal
At the evening session the Conference commenced consideration of the Executive’s report on the ballot box scandal. In order that the report might be presented to the Conference by Mr Willis, who was chairman of the committee appointed by the previous Conference to investigate the matter, Mr Willis vacated the chair, and the senior vice-president of the ALP Executive (Mr EC Magrath) presided.
There were present by invitation of the Conference Messrs J Bailey, MLA, AW Buckley, Gavin Sutherland, and Alderman RD Bramston, and
Messrs TJ Smith, MLC, and PJ Minahan, MLA, all of whom had been expelled from the Labour movement by the Executive on the recommendation of the ballot box committee. The expulsions of Messrs Smith and Minahan were for two years only. Each of the six had lodged an appeal against his expulsion.

Mr Buckley: I want this Conference to know that, as one of the expelled persons, I am not yet aware what is the evidence that has been taken by the committee. (Uproar)

“As one of the persons expelled”, continued Mr Buckley above the uproar, “I am entitled to a copy of all the evidence taken by this committee. I cannot be expected to answer charges of which I know nothing.”

(Laughter and cries of “Oh.”)

The chairman: There is some correspondence I have just received this moment from the Federal Executive.

**Federal Intervention**

A letter to the president of the State Executive (Mr Willis) from the president of the Federal Executive (Mr R Sumner), dated “Sydney, April 19, 1924”, was then read by the chairman. It stated that for some time past the Federal Executive of the ALP had been in receipt of letters from various persons regarding the holding of an inquiry into the ballot box matter. The letters were from the Women Workers’ Union, from Mr Buckland (secretary of the AWU central branch), from Mr Freund (secretary King branch ALP), and from Alderman Bramston. These letters asked for the Federal Executive to be called together, and for an inquiry to be held. A letter had also been received by the Federal Executive (their communication stated) from Mr W Carey (secretary of the State Executive), stating that his Executive did not see any necessity for such an inquiry, but at the same time, his Executive, in order to smooth matters over, would welcome an inquiry of a public character and with the evidence taken on oath. Subsequently, the letter continued, a letter had been received from the Federal Council of the AWU, asking for the Federal Executive to intervene and take charge of the credentials of delegates to the ALP Conference, and hold an open inquiry into the ballot box matters, and stating that the AWU would pay the expenses. A committee of three (the letter stated) had been appointed by the Federal Executive, to confer with the State Executive, the committee consisting of Messrs L McDonald (Queensland), JJ Kenneally (Western Australia), and R Sumner (Queensland). This committee had been in Sydney, and had cooperated with the credentials committee regarding delegates to the Conference.

“It is proposed as early as possible”, the letter concluded, “to hold an open inquiry regarding the ballot boxes. I would be glad of the cooperation of your Executive and of Conference”.

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"The chairman also read a copy of a telegram from the secretary of the ALP Federal Executive (Mr Stewart) to the Federal President (Mr Sumner) reading: “Executive Council, AWU, requests ALP Executive intervene NSW dispute. They agree defray cost. Want committee of three take charge credentials, and conduct ballot box inquiry”.

The chairman stated that the letter he had read from the Federal Executive of the ALP had only just been received by him. It bore that day’s date, and had been handed in a few moments previously. About a week previously it had been learned from the press that the Federal president and Federal secretary were about to visit Sydney. After their arrival Messrs Willis, Tyrrell, and himself interviewed them, and Mr Willis offered to supply any information they desired. After discussion, Mr Sumner told them on Monday last that the Federal Executive saw no reason to intervene. Nothing further had been heard from the Federal officials until the previous day. The Federal officials attended a meeting of the State Executive the previous day, and stated that they did not intend to intervene in the affairs of the New South Wales Executive, unless invited by Conference to do so. The chairman then called upon Mr Willis to present to Conference the report of the ballot box committee, which, it was agreed, should be taken as read.

Mr Bailey’s Position

Mr Bailey, MLA, at this stage interjected. “Before Mr Willis presents his report to Conference”, said Mr Bailey, “I want to make my position quite clear. For six months I have been asking for an open inquiry. We have been asking for copies of the alleged evidence that has been taken behind our backs, and from which condensed reports have been prepared. That is not the way for honest men and women to deal with people who have worked for the Labour movement for 25 years”.

Mr Bailey, who had difficulty in obtaining a hearing, was at this stage interrupted by cries of dissent and a chorus of “Ohs!”

“I will ask the Federal Executive to commence an inquiry in the morning”, continued Mr Bailey above the uproar. “I don’t want a hole-and-corner report presented to you. There are men hiding in dark places, and I want to drag them out and show them to you”. (Uproar)

The chairman called Mr Bailey to order, informing him that he could make his statement later.

Mr Buckley’s Attitude

Mr Buckley next interjected. “I want to emphasise this point”, he shouted, but his voice was almost drowned by cries of “Sit down” and “Wind-bag”.
“You are here as a jury”, continued Mr Buckley, excitedly addressing the delegates, who were still in a state of uproar.

The chairman called Mr Buckley to order, and had a hurried conversation with him. He then announced to the Conference that Mr Buckley had asked him for a copy of the evidence in the possession of the committee, and that he had replied that he could not supply it till it had been presented to the Conference. When the matter was before the Conference in its entirety, then the Conference could do as it pleased.

Mr Buckley: “As one of the persons concerned in this matter, don’t you think it right that I should have been present at the inquiry?”

**Federal President Speaks**

Mr R Sumner (president of the Federal Executive of the ALP) at this stage made a statement in amplification of the letter from the Federal Executive. He stated that the action taken had been in accord with its policy of refusing to intervene in the affairs of the States without the cooperation of the State Executive. In domestic affairs the State Executive must be supreme. It was for the Conference to decide how the matter should be decided.

Mr J Kelly (Newtown ALP) then moved that the Conference, having heard the statement of the Federal president and the correspondence, should hand the matter over to the Federal Executive to hold the open inquiry. It was stated, on behalf of the expelled men, that evidence had been added at a later date and the evidence had been taken in their absence. He did not know if the statements were correct, but while they stood the Conference should realise the need for Federal intervention, as no one could accuse the Federal president of partisanship. If they did not it would be a slur on the supreme authority. (Cries of “Oh.”)

The chairman refused to accept the motion.

**Mr Bailey Walks Out**

Cries for Mr Willis came from all parts of the hall, but as the president stepped forward Mr Bailey snatched his hat, and amid a deafening clamour tried to address the meeting. Loud and continuous hooting prevented him, and he turned to leave the meeting.

“I am leaving myself in the hands of the Federal Executive. I am not going to submit to a packed Conference”, he said, and putting on his hat, he left the hall.

Excitement ran very high, and the clamour was deafening. Then Mr Buckley tried to address the meeting, but his words were inaudible. Booing and hooting came from all parts of the hall.
“You have packed this Conference. You will win tonight, but we will win another night”, Mr Buckley said, and, turning to the chairman, added: “The Conference is packed, and I shall withdraw”.

While some of his friends tried to dissuade him from following Mr Bailey, the excitement of the meeting reached feverish height. The clamour for the committee’s report came from everywhere.

Mr Willis was again about to start when Alderman Bramston interrupted. “On every other occasion when there was an inquiry I have been there, and I’m stopping here tonight”, he said.

When order was ultimately restored the chairman assured the meeting that after the committee had presented its report copies of the evidence would be supplied to the persons concerned, if any delegate liked to move in that direction.

Mr Willis’s Report

Mr Willis then took the floor and commenced his report amid profound and attentive silence, which, with the exception of a few interjections that were sternly suppressed by the chairman, was maintained until he had finished.

Mr Willis then traced the whole course of the inquiries, restating the position as it was before the last Conference, and detailing the procedure adopted by the committee. He read a number of affidavits, which have already been published in substance, and summarised the facts of the case on which the committee had arrived at its findings.

The evidence, said Mr Willis, had revealed the following facts, which were admitted:- That irregular ballot boxes were made; that some of them at least had been used; that Arthur Buckley had sent the person who made the boxes to a certain place; that the person had received payment for the boxes from the ALP through Arthur Buckley. There were three statements from the party who made the boxes, and when interviewed he had said that he had been instructed to make them with sliding panels. The facts that Buckley sent the man to get the job, and that he was paid through Buckley, were not evidence that the latter knew they were “crook”, but they produced a set of circumstances that were very suspicious indeed.

The letter of Mr TJ Smith to Mr Sproule, read at the previous ALP Conference, dealing with his knowledge of and part in the alleged conspiracy was also read.

Mr Willis said further that the committee had spared no trouble to obtain all information on the case available. There were about a dozen sworn declarations. If the expelled men were innocent, some party or parties were guilty of swearing their honour away, and they had their remedy; but if the statements were true the men named therein were unfit to be in the Labour movement. If the declarations were untrue they
constituted one of the most cunning and diabolical conspiracies that had ever been hatched.

In summing up his report, Mr Willis said that Alderman Bramston’s statement was a blank denial that he knew anything about it. (Laughter)

Mr Buckley’s defence was that he was the victim of an unfortunate set of circumstances that made it look suspicious, but that he had no knowledge that anything was wrong. That was conceivable, but highly improbable. (Hear, hear) There was nothing against Mr Gavin Sutherland except that he was present at the meetings at which the matter was alleged to have been discussed. But the point was, legally, that if he was present and took part in the meetings he was as guilty as the others. All the parties admitted the meetings, but denied that the matters alleged were discussed.

A delegate: What about Minahan?

Mr Willis: Mr Minahan is not in the same category. The position was that we had been informed that he was advised that it was being done when the boxes were made. We sent him a courteous note asking him to attend, but he replied that he had only heard of the matter at a more recent date. We took the view that he was an old Labourite and a prominent member of the movement. He supported Executive control previously, and on this occasion he ignored us. We were forced to impose the penalty we did lest it might be said that we favoured him.

Mr Minahan: You did not command me to come, you requested me. I am prepared to take my solemn oath now that I knew nothing about it.

Mr Willis: We have not associated Mr Minahan with the corruption of the ballot boxes. His position now is the same as it was before. If he will intimate that he will attend and answer the questions put to him by the committee, the penalty will be a matter for reconsideration. If he will not the penalty must stand.

At the request of Alderman Bramston, the statement which he made to the committee in defence was read.

At 10.30 pm the Conference adjourned until 9.30 this morning.

Day 3, Monday, 21 April 1924

Ballot Box Scandals. Four Expulsions Confirmed

An Angry Debate

After continuing the discussion on the ballot box committee’s report until 10 o’clock last night, the ALP Conference, by a large majority, endorsed the action of the Executive in expelling Alderman RD Bramston from the Labour movement.
Within ten minutes the Conference also endorsed the expulsions of Mr AW Buckley, Mr Gavin Sutherland, and Mr J Bailey, MLA.

The cases of Mr TJ Smith, MLC, and Mr PJ Minahan, MLA, who were expelled by the Executive for two years, and of Mr J Farrell, whose name was mentioned in the Executive’s report, will be considered by the Conference this evening.

Protests Lodged

The senior vice-president (Mr EC Magrath) occupied the chair throughout yesterday’s sittings. The leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour party (Mr M Charlton, MP) was among those on the platform.

When the Conference resumed protests were made regarding the eligibility of a number of delegates present to act.

Mr T Holloway (AWU) objected to Mr Mark Davidson, MLA for Sturt, acting as a delegate for Dulwich Hill branch, asserting that he was not eligible to do so.

The chairman said Mr Holloway must refer his objection to the credentials committee, which would report to the Conference.

Mr Holloway: Yes. Next year.

Proceeding, Mr Holloway said that he insisted upon the chairman of the credentials committee (Mr Tyrrell) being called upon to report to the Conference on the whole of the business it had dealt with, and this was done.

Mr Tyrrell, on behalf of the credentials committee, reported that the committee had decided to dismiss protests received regarding the election of delegates to the Conference by the Sydney Electorate Council and the Eastern Suburbs Electorate Council. He moved (amidst further uproar) that the report be adopted.

Mr Cecil Last (AWU) opposed the adoption of the report on the grounds that the King branch and the Darling Harbour branch had not been represented at the meeting of the Sydney State Council at which delegates had been elected, and that Belmore had been represented by an inflated delegation representative of a fictitious and “packed” membership. If the Conference was prepared to accept that, he was prepared to leave the Conference at that moment. (Applause and dissent)

Continuing, Mr Last accused Mr Willis of having authorised the general secretary (Mr Carey) to send a member of the Executive (Mr Conroy) to a meeting of the King branch “to create a wrangle there, and interfere with the election of delegates”. (Uproar) The Executive, he said had appointed an investigation committee to inquire into the affair, but it had never completed the inquiry. It was one of the worst cases of manipulation ever perpetrated in the history of the movement. (Hear, hear, and applause.)
Further charges were made by Mr Last in connection with the elections of branch delegates, and amidst uproar, he characterised the credentials committee as being “the most astute manipulators and super-tricksters”. (Uproar.)

After further uproarious scenes, it was decided “that Mr Last be no longer heard”, and that Mr Tyrrell be allowed to reply.

Mr Tyrrell dealt in detail with various protests that had been received by the committee. In connection with the King branch’s meeting, he asserted that Mr Last had acted as deputy returning officer at the meeting, that he had allowed Maltese to vote at the meeting, and had himself signed 13 different signatures in the membership roll-book, and had permitted various irregularities. (Uproar)

Mr Last: I say you are a liar. (Further uproar.)

The chairman: You must withdraw that remark.

Mr Last: I withdraw the remark, but not the facts. (Renewed uproar.)

The remark was eventually withdrawn.

Mr Tyrrell, proceeding, said that Mr Last’s colleague had subsequently attended a meeting of the ALP Executive, and stated the facts in connection with the meeting of the King branch. Mr Willis had been forced to declare the proceedings illegal, and had decided that the previous year’s delegates should represent the King branch until the investigation committee had reported. The committee had reported, but the Executive, considering the report did not go far enough, had referred it back to the committee.

Mr Last vigorously denied Mr Tyrrell’s accusations. He said that he was not the deputy returning officer. He had not been censured by the investigation committee, and he had not signed 13 different signatures in the King roll-book (Applause and dissent.)

Mr EC O’Dea (Shop Assistants’ Union) moved as an amendment: “That the matters be referred for investigation to the Federal Executive of the ALP, and that they be asked to report to this Conference”.

Mr Conroy (Executive) said the Federal Executive officers now in Sydney had already reviewed the work of the credentials committee since it had started, had sanctioned the committee’s work, and endorsed its recommendations.

Mr Kenneally, of South Australia (Federal Executive), corroborated Mr Conroy’s statement.

After further animated discussion, Mr O’Dea’s amendment was put to the Conference, and defeated.

The motion: “That the report of the credentials committee be adopted,” was then carried.
Readmission Claimed

A letter was received from Mr SJ Hurst applying for readmission to the movement. The chairman said that Mr Hurst had opposed endorsed Labour candidates in Granville, and it had consequently been decided, in accordance with the rules, that he was ineligible for membership for a period of four years.

It was decided that Mr Hurst should be allowed to address the Conference on Thursday evening.

Ballot Box Scandal

At midday the Conference resumed consideration of the portion of the Executive’s annual report dealing with the ballot box scandal. Of the expelled members, Alderman RD Bramston, Mr TJ Smith, MLC, and Mr PJ Minahan were again in attendance. Mr Gavin Sutherland was present in the morning only, and Messrs J Bailey, MLA, and AW Buckley did not attend.

In the afternoon a letter was received from Mr Gavin Sutherland, which the chairman read to the Conference. In the letter Mr Sutherland stated that he had been present at the Conference on Saturday, and again that morning, desirous of making a statement in reference to the inquiry. He had tried to catch the chairman’s eye, but without avail. As the Federal Executive proposed to hold an open inquiry he intimated that he was leaving his case unreservedly in the hands of the Federal Executive, and wished that this should be conveyed to the Conference.

The chairman, after reading the letter stated: I intimated to Mr Sutherland that as soon as the president had finished his report he would be given an opportunity to make a statement.

Mr Willis’s Report

Mr Willis then continued to read to the Conference various sworn declarations and statements placed before the ballot-box committee. He was interrupted several times by one of the AWU delegates, Mr Ambrose, who desired him to answer questions.

The chairman several times called Mr Ambrose to order, asking him to keep his questions until Mr Willis had concluded.

Mr Ambrose continued to ask Mr Willis questions.

Mr Willis warned Mr Ambrose that if he did not sit down he would tell the Conference of a remark he (Mr Ambrose) had made when the ballot box committee was taking evidence.

Mr Ambrose again rose.

Mr Willis (excitedly, pointing to Mr Ambrose): You see, ladies and gentlemen, the type of this man here. The first night that Mr Bailey came
into the room in which the ballot box committee was sitting, he brought this man with him as his stenographer. When Cummings said something that did not suit Bailey this man (pointing to Ambrose) said to Bailey, “Knock him on the head”. Mr Ambrose (amidst hoots and uproar): You are a liar.

The Chairman: You must withdraw that.

Mr Willis: I mentioned that, ladies and gentlemen, to show the type of man brought along there to assist Mr Bailey. (Applause and cries of “Throw him out.”)

Referring to the defence of Mr Bailey, Mr Willis said that Mr Bailey had been present at the committee’s meeting and heard the statement of Cummings (the maker of the ballot boxes) respecting himself, and had cross-examined Cummings on that statement so it was not true that Bailey did not know what he was accused of.

Mr Willis then read to the Conference a statutory declaration made by Mr Bailey on July 18, 1923. In the declaration, Mr Bailey stated that he had read the statement given to him by Mr Willis, wherein it was set out that Cummings had made “crook” ballot boxes and had explained the operation of the sliding panel to him (Mr Bailey), and that he (Mr Bailey) had said, “That will do”. Mr Bailey in the statutory declaration stated that he had never discussed sliding panel boxes or the making of them; that he had not been present at the meeting at which the matter was stated to have been discussed; that he had never spoken to Cummings; that he did not know anything about the boxes; and that he had never used any undue influence over any member of the Executive.

“All this clamour that you have heard”, continued Mr Willis, “that Bailey did not know what he was charged with, is denied by Bailey’s own statutory declaration, in which he states he had read the charges”.

A delegate: Does not that refer only to Cummings’ statements.

Mr Willis: They are the two principal things – so far as Bailey is concerned – Cummings’ statement and Smith’s statement.

An Interruption

When the Conference reassembled after the luncheon adjournment, Mr Roels (Engine-drivers and Firemen) asked for the suspension of standing orders to permit the Conference to appoint a chairman for the committee appointed, on the motion of Mr Baddeley, to inquire into the question of consolidating the ranks of the Communists and the ALP.

The chairman refused to grant the suspension, assuring the Conference that the matter would be taken later in the meeting, and his decision was upheld by the Conference on a division, by 145 votes to 108.

Some confusion followed the announcement of the division, and about 50 delegates rose and left the Conference room in a body. At a later
stage of the proceedings they returned in a body, amid a burst of satirical
cheers and cries of “solidarity.”

Mr Farrell’s Case

Mr Willis then resumed his report on the ballot box scandal. He said that
the matter had been much simplified by the withdrawal of three of the
parties, Messrs Bailey, Buckley and Sutherland, who had intimated that
they were not prepared to accept the decision of the Conference. The case
of Mr J Farrell was stated in the report to be in suspense, as the
committee had been unable to trace his whereabouts, and further time to
give him an opportunity of attending was asked for. Mr Willis said that
up to the present Mr Farrell had failed to attend the committee. He had
been included in the report, not because the committee had evidence of
anything that he had done, but that he was a party to the group. When
the report was received it would be for the Conference to decide what
extenuating or mitigating circumstances might exist. As the parties, with
the exception of Alderman Bramston, had not considered the report
sufficiently serious to sit and listen to, it was only fair that judgment
should go against them by default. They could appeal to whatever author-
ity they liked. As far as Alderman Bramston’s position was concerned,
the evidence showed that he gave the instructions and inspected the
boxes. In Mr Smith’s statement, Bramston was said to have been
responsible for the original suggestion in the meeting of the parties.
There was also the matter of the AWU tickets and voting slips.

Unauthorised Ticket

Mr Willis also produced the alleged fraudulent printed blocks of AWU
tickets and voting slips, which he said, had been sent to him by post.
Although the blocks had been used, there was, he said, no vestige of
evidence that they had been used by Bailey or the other parties affected.
There was in them, however, evidence of a generally corrupt state into
which the movement at the time had fallen. He did not want any of the
proceedings of the committee to be construed into an attack on the AWU,
for someone outside the AWU might conceivably have made the blocks.
Returning to the evidence, Mr Willis said that the fact that Alderman
Bramston had brought witnesses to prove that on the night in question
he was at a Paddington League meeting did not affect the issue.

Mr Willis then dealt with the alibi set up by Mr Bailey, to the effect
that he was away from Sydney during the ten days covering the issue.
He detailed a large amount of evidence collected by the committee, to
prove, with the exception of one day upon which there was some doubt,
that Mr Bailey was in Sydney during the entire period. In this connection
he stated that the books of the ALP had been manipulated.
A delegate: Do you accuse Mr Carey?

Mr Willis: Emphatically no! You heard Mr Carey at the last Conference, when he stated that the rooms of the ALP had been broken into.

Continuing, Mr Willis said that up to the present Mr Bailey had not made a statutory declaration concerning his absence from the city, although he was invited by the committee to do so.

In concluding, Mr Willis referred to instructions given by Mr Bailey to a solicitor to obtain a full account of his (Mr Willis’) past. “But even if he can prove me black, does it make him white?” he asked, amid great applause.

“I claim to be no better than the other delegates in this Conference”, continued Mr Willis, “but I realise that this movement has everything to gain if it goes straight. We have done the work given us by the Conference to do, but it does not mean that there are not others equally as bad as those who have been expelled. If there are others guilty treat them in the same way.” (Loud applause.)

In reply to a question, the president said that he had received a long statement from Mr Tom Arthur, raising very serious issues. Although it confirmed the committee’s findings, as it had been received subsequent to the findings he had refrained from presenting it.

It was agreed to deal with the cases of each of the expelled members seriatum.

Expulsions Supported

Mr JF O’Reilly (Hairdressers’ Union, and a member of the ballot box committee) seconded the motion for the adoption of the portion of the Executives’ report dealing with the ballot box scandal. The committee, he said, had traced the men who gave the orders for the making of the boxes, the men chiefly concerned in the making of them, and the man who had delivered them. He reviewed the evidence in detail, and submitted that the committee had carried out its duties faithfully and well.

Mr J Howie, a member of the ballot box committee, said he heartily supported and stood loyally behind the committee’s report. He was not concerned with whether or not the evidence could hold good in the capitalist courts of the country. If the Labour party accepted the capitalists’ courts and ethics, he did not. (Laughter and dissent.) If he (Mr Howie) had had his way, Mr Smith would have been expelled altogether. So far as Mr Bailey was concerned, he (Mr Howie) stood with the committee, which had put his case very clearly. However, he did not consider that the Conference, considering the state of mind delegates were in, was fit to sift and dissect the evidence. While he considered the men were guilty, he still desired to give them the right to go to a higher tribunal if they desired. (Dissent.)
Mr Bramston's Defence

Alderman RD Bramston, in appealing to the Conference against his expulsion, said that he had been three times before the ballot box committee. The first time he had told the committee the truth of the whole matter so far as he knew it. The second time he gave the committee a flat denial of the statement made that he had given the order for the boxes to Cummings, and the third time he had appeared to prove that on the Tuesday night that he was said to have given the orders to Cummings at the Trades Hall, he had been at a meeting in the Paddington Town Hall, and could not have been at the Trades Hall. When he got to the committee meeting, however, he found that by some "back-handed methods" Cummings had altered the date mentioned in the previous statement, to the Monday night. On that night he had been at a City Council meeting as was shown by City Council records that he produced. He did not care, however, what date or time Cummings said he spoke of him because he had never seen Cummings. He read to the Conference statutory declarations from a number of people giving particulars as to his whereabouts on dates when it had been alleged he participated in meetings connected with the ballot box affair, which, he said, disproved the statements made to the committee. While he thought that Mr Willis had exercised the greatest fairness in the inquiry, he could not understand a man of his intellectual attainments listening to such statements as were relied upon.

Proceeding, Alderman Bramston reviewed in detail the evidence given on various occasions by Cummings, and contended that it was contradictory, unreliable, and untrue. He also read statements from a civil engineer and the clerk of works and overseer of works to the City Council, stating that if a ballot box had been made to the specifications in question it could not have a sliding panel. He had never seen Cummings, nor had he given any order to him or anyone else for ballot boxes, and neither he nor Messrs Farrell and Gavin Sutherland could be impeached of anything dishonest. He did not run away from the Conference. He had stood his ground because he knew that he was innocent of "the dirty thing" he had been accused of. The Conference could do what it thought right, and he would abide by its decision.

In reply to questions by Mr Willis, Alderman Bramston admitted having received a number of AWU tickets. Mr Smith, he stated, had come to him during the election campaign and suggested that they should make some people members of the AWU. He did not see anything wrong in that. The tickets had been given to him by Mr T Bartle, and the reason why he had not returned them was because they had been stolen from him.
Further Disorder

At the opening of the night’s proceedings the chairman challenged the credentials of Mr Taylor. He said that he had been informed that Mr Taylor had entered Conference on Mr Lambert’s ticket. He wished to know if Mr Taylor was credentialled by the AWU as an alternate delegate.

Mr Taylor: Yes, I am.

The records were perused, and the chairman announced that Mr Taylor did not possess credentials, and asked him to leave. This was the signal for an onslaught from all parts of the hall on the credentials of various delegates. All the tickets were examined by members of the credentials committee, amid general confusion. There were many scenes, and two delegates had to be dragged apart to avoid a conflict. A number of delegates on both sides of the Conference were without tickets, and were asked to leave.

The chairman then announced that the committee appointed on Saturday to deal with the Communist question had been unable to agree upon a chairman and asked Conference to make the appointment.

Mr Mullins nominated Mr Sumner (president of the Federal Executive), and Mr O'Dea nominated Mr Baddeley, who had moved for the appointment of the committee.

A division was taken, but Mr Baddeley concurred in Mr Sumner’s appointment, without the votes being counted.

Mr Beasley demanded a count, and after a check was taken of the badges another division was taken. Mr Sumner was elected by 151 votes to 122.

A very determined effort was made to block the business by a number of delegates, who rose one after the other to move the suspension of the standing orders. One after another the chairman was forced to name the delegates. Fifteen such interruptions occurred amidst the utmost confusion within a few minutes.

Mr Willis (stepping to the front of the platform and speaking very emphatically): you can fake up any stunts you like, but you are not going to beat us in this matter. You are not going to get away with it. If you persist we will take the vote on the matter before us.

This had a quietening effect, and order was eventually restored.

Alderman Bramston: Yes I do, [sic] and I also know that I got about 500 votes, and Smith topped the poll.

At this stage one of the “crook” ballot boxes was carried into the room amid derisive laughter.

In reply to a further question, Alderman Bramston said that Cummings had changed the date on which the case against him rested seventeen days after he had been expelled.
Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants) moved that, in view of the new evidence brought by Alderman Bramston, his case should be referred to the Federal Executive. He said that if ever anyone had established his innocence Mr Bramston had done so. If there had not been so much prejudice on the matter he would have moved a straight-out motion that Alderman Bramston’s appeal should be upheld. They had been fighting with their passions instead of their brains. If they continued their investigations for another ten years it would be preferable to hounding an innocent man out of the movement.

At this stage Mr TJ Smith intimated that he wished to make a statement.

The chairman: In reference to Mr Bramston’s statement?

Mr Smith: On my own behalf.

After some further words, permission was refused, the chairman stating that Mr Smith could speak only to Mr Bramston’s statement.

Mr D McLelland (Blacksmiths’ Union), in seconding the amendment, said that the statements of Smith and Cummings, on which the charges against Bramston were based, were not corroborated. In addition, the affidavits produced by Bramston to the Conference had not been placed before the committee that tried the case.

Mr Baddeley, MLA, (Miners, and member of the Federal Executive) speaking in opposition to the matter being referred to the Federal Executive, said that the highest tribunal to which they could appeal was the working class movement – the rank and file of the movement. He was of the opinion that the committee had done its duty and understood its responsibilities. The matter should not be side-tracked by referring it to the Federal Executive. It should be dealt with immediately, and the report should be adopted. The movement should be kept sound, solid, and clean.

It was moved, “That the question be now put”, and this was declared carried.

Mr Willis Replies

Mr Willis, who was given the right to reply to the debate, said that the question of expulsion for life had been raised. No Conference nor any other body in the Labour movement had the right to expel members from the movement “for life”. The Conference was master of its own business, and it could confirm, review, or reconsider the Executive’s action in regard to those expulsions. The statement of Cummings, upon which the Executive had expelled the men in question, had been made on July 11, and the expulsions had not taken place until August 10.

“With regard to these statutory declarations”, continued Mr Willis, “put in tonight by Mr Bramston —”

A delegate: Do you doubt them?
Mr Willis: Yes. (Uproar) I don’t say they are false, but I doubt them until I have had an opportunity of proving them. (Applause and dissent) If Mr Bramston can prove absolutely that he was not here in Sydney at the time then it will be clear he could not have seen Cummings.

Alderman Bramston: I shall prove that without a doubt.

Mr Willis: Very well. But, I put it to this Conference, without saying that these declarations are not true, that if a man can come in here and put down half a dozen statements and say “There is the answer” and you accept that, well, then you are a lot of simpletons, that is all. I am still not saying these declarations are not true.

In dealing with the amendment to refer the question of Mr Bramston’s case to the Federal Executive, Mr Willis said that the Conference had paid the committee the compliment of having put the case fairly. What then was the reason of their wanting to hand it over to the Federal body? It was only an effort to take it out of the hands of the Conference, and to hand it over to someone to patch it up. He was not a party to using a brutal majority. (Jeers) He was willing to give every opportunity to investigate the new declarations brought forward by Mr Bramston.

Taking one of the ballot boxes in his hand Mr Willis dealt with the expert evidence on their construction brought forward by Mr Bramston. “If we are to take the expert’s evidence”, he said, “the sliding panels should be made so that they would not slide. But they do slide. You cannot build a fictitious case out of that, as it speaks for itself”.

Mr Willis said that he proposed to add to the motion the words, “that the ballot box committee be directed to further investigate the statutory declarations submitted by Mr Bramston, with power to recommend, at its discretion, to the Executive, that any penalty imposed by this Conference be lifted”.

Objection was taken to the motion being amended after the debate had closed, and it was decided to submit it in its original form.

Mr O’Dea endeavoured to have this amendment altered to provide that the matter should be referred back to the committee without asking the Conference to make a decision, but the alteration was not accepted.

**Voting Amidst Uproar**

The delegates divided on the amendment. The chairman declared the amendment lost, and the announcement was greeted with cheers.

The motion for the adoption of that portion of the Executive’s report expelling Alderman RD Bramston from the Labour movement was then put to the Conference, and was carried by a large majority.

Scenes of uproar occurred during the next ten minutes, in which motions for the endorsement of the expulsion of Messrs A W Buckley, Gavin Sutherland, and J Bailey, MLA, were put to the Conference.
“Mr Buckley is not present and obviously there can be no defence”, said the chairman. “What is the wish of Conference?”

“Question be put,” shouted many delegates.

A division was called for and taken amid confusion. Another division was forced upon the issue. Delegates stood on chairs waving their hands frantically and shouting excitedly.

“The motion is carried”, announced the chairman, amid cheers and applause.

Mr Sutherland’s case was next dealt with.

“You have heard Mr Sutherland’s letter, and in view of his failure to attend there can be no discussion”, said the chairman.

Delegates: Get it over, put the question.

Other delegates: Bring out the butcher’s block.

Excitement ran very high during the divisions which followed, and the chairman announced that Mr Sutherland’s expulsion was carried by a substantial majority. There was prolonged applause.

When the motion for the expulsion of Mr Bailey was put a division was called for, and the “Ayes,” who were in a large majority, went to one side of the hall.

The chairman ordered the minority voting against the expulsion to be counted – but the delegates refused to show their badges to the tellers, and consequently the number of the small minority could not be counted.

The chairman then declared the motion carried, and the announcement was received with cheers.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, consideration of Mr Smith’s case was postponed till Conference resumes at 7 o’clock tonight.

Nominations of Officers

Nominations for the various Executive positions closed last evening, and were announced by the returning officer (Mr W Gibbs).

For the position of president there were two nominations, those of Mr AC Willis (the retiring president), and Mr B Sheiles (Clerical Association).

The two retiring vice-presidents, Messrs EC Magrath (Printing Trades) and JJ Tyrrell (Municipal Employees) are being opposed by Messrs C Eldridge (North Shore ALP) and Geo. C Bodkin (AWU).

The return of the retiring officials is regarded as being almost certain.
Day 4, Tuesday, 22 April 1924

Ballot Box Scandals. Two Executive Expulsions Removed

Messrs Smith and Minahan
The ALP Conference last night further considered the report of the Executive on the ballot box scandal.

The portion of the report recommending that Mr TJ Smith, MLC, be expelled from the Labour movement for two years was rejected. 118 delegates voted in favour of its adoption and 130 against.

The Conference decided not to endorse the ballot box committee’s expression of utter disapproval of the action of Mr PE Coleman, MP, in failing to report the discovery of a ballot box with a sliding panel to the Executive.

The expulsion of Mr PJ Minahan, MLA, for a period of two years, was not endorsed.

Custody of Infants
The senior vice-president (Mr EC Magrath) presided.

A letter was received asking for the support of delegates to the Conference in the request to be made to the Government for the amendment of the Infants Custody and Maintenance Act to allow Emelie Polini and other mothers to have the custody of their children.

Miss Annie Golding, having secured the suspension of the standing orders, moved – “That this Conference protest against Emelie Polini being deprived of the custody of her child, and join in the representations to be made to the Government”.

The motion was seconded by another woman delegate.

Mrs Lynch, opposing the motion, said that it had nothing to do with that Conference which was convened to deal with “working class matters”. Emelie Polini could afford to employ the best barristers to look after her case. (Dissent)

The motion was carried.

Forged Blocks
A letter was received from the president of the Railway Workers’ Industry branch of the AWU in reference to the statements made by the president (Mr Willis), during his report on the findings of the ballot box committee, concerning the fraudulent printing blocks of tickets and voting slips of the AWU. On behalf of the branch, he asked the following questions: (a) Are there or were there ever any fraudulent printing blocks of the tickets of the Railway Workers’ Branch of the AWU in existence?
(b) Was any officer of the branch in any way connected with the ballot box scandal?

Mr Willis personally answered the first question in the affirmative. He answered the second in the negative, adding that there was never any suggestion that any officer of the branch was implicated in the scandal.

The Unemployed

Mr F Spillman also wrote asking permission to address the Conference on behalf of the unemployed. Mr G Buckland (AWU) moved that he should be immediately heard. Several delegates suggested alternative times and it was eventually decided that Mr Spillman should address the Conference at 8 o’clock tonight.

Delegate: For how long?

Method of Election

Mr Falingham (Boilermakers) said he desired to move the suspension of the standing orders in order to ask the Conference to consider the advisability of adopting the group system for the election of officers, as outlined by the Trades and Labour Council. It was imperative that the question should be explained to the country delegates and its benefits outlined. So that they should take a united stand at the approaching elections, something would have to be done to retain the support of the industrialists. Unless something was done the industrialists would withdraw their financial support from the political movement of the Labour movement.

Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers), referring also to the system of election of officers, said that if they were divided in the industrial centres the fate of the Labour Government was sealed. He had travelled round the country and was astounded at the puerile speeches delivered by Labour men. The fate of the Labour Government depended upon whether there was to be concerted action between industrialists and leaguitees. If they continued to ignore the trades union — (Uproar and cries of “Sit Down.”)

Mr Lang, MLA, said that the speakers were out of order.

The chairman said that a motion for suspension of standing orders was out of order at that stage.

Mr TJ Smith’s Case

Mr Willis moved the adoption of the portion of the Executive’s report on the ballot box scandal, which recommended that Mr TJ Smith, MLC, be expelled from the Labour movement for a period of two years.

Mr Smith, addressing the Conference in his own defence, said that the ballot box committee’s report had been submitted to the ALP
Executive nine months ago. Since that time he had not, in the press or anywhere else, made any representation regarding it. He had had in mind that that Conference would give him the opportunity to present his side of the case. During that nine months there had been much propaganda from other quarters, and the statement had been made that he had been closely allied with the AWU. True, he had been a member of the Armidale branch of the AWU – 300 miles away from Sydney – when he was selected, in 1916, to contest the King seat; and when he was elected he had to take out a ticket in the central branch of the organisation for one year because he resided in Sydney, but he had never been closely allied with it or with certain persons he was said to have been allied with. Reference had been made to his (Mr Smith’s) statement at the last ALP Conference, but he stood, not on a statement made to fit the case, but upon the letter he wrote three years before, and which he read to the previous Conference.

It has been said the AWU “crook” tickets had elected Smith to Parliament, continued Mr Smith. He would hand £5 to Mr Howie’s propaganda if Mr Howie could prove that more than 25 AWU votes were polled. He would expect Mr Howie to give £5 to any fund that he would name if his statement was proved to be false.

Mr Smith then reviewed the statement which he made to the last Conference. “It had been said that it was a nice thing for me to tell on other men”, he continued. “It was a nice thing to suggest that Jack Birt and Frank Burke should be politically assassinated with their hands tied behind their backs. I want to say that every effort to run the AWU ticket was frustrated by me.”

Delegate: You took a long time to speak about it.

Mr Smith (heatedly): I took a long time? Alright, let me deal with that. When I frustrated it I went to John Storey —

Delegates: He is dead.

Mr Smith (excitedly): Dead, is he? Alright, I went to Peter Loughlin – he is not dead. (Uproar.)

“Give me a fair deal, wait a while”, shouted Mr Smith, about the disorder. “People say I was in a difficult position. It was seven weeks before an election. After the election the Labour Government did not know whether it was a Government or not. Bailey was in charge of the Executive. What chance did I have?”

Becoming very excited, Mr Smith reviewed all the practices which he alleged were resorted to defeat him at the election.

At the last Conference (he continued) the voting was declared on the Friday, and on the Saturday he interviewed the president. For the first time there was an anti-Bailey Executive, and he could get a fair go. That was a clear reason why he did not speak before.

Delegate: No.

Mr Smith: Well there never will be one for my friend.
Continuing, he said that the fact that he knew nothing about the ballot box matter was that his name had never figured in the Cummings and other statements.

Mr Smith went on to say that just after last Conference he received a criminal summons alleging that he stole AWU tickets 3½ years ago. The magistrate said he would be lacking in powers of perception and unfitted for his position if he jeopardised the liberty of any individual on the evidence submitted to him. The magistrate dismissed the case without calling on the defence. Continuing, Mr Smith said that was the sort of thing that was done to a man when he endeavoured to do the right thing. He was not repentant. He was proud of the fact that he had taken a hand in shifting out Bailey and his satellites. (Cheers and dissent) He was willing to answer any questions.

Mr Smith Questioned

Mr T Bartle (AWU) having obtained leave to question Mr Smith, asked him if it was true that he (Mr Bartle) had attended any meeting of candidates as had been alleged.

Mr Smith: No.

Mr Bartle: Did I give you at any time “faked” tickets?

Mr Smith: The tickets I received were not, as is generally understood, “faked” tickets. They were, as far as I know, genuine.

Mr Bartle next questioned Mr Smith regarding a statement he (Mr Smith) was said to have made at the AWU inquiry into the ballot box scandal.

Mr Smith said he would not permit any of the evidence he was said to have given at the AWU’s inquiry to be used. There were seven or eight AWU men at that inquiry. He had never been supplied with a copy of the evidence nor been asked if the notes on it were correct, and several things that appeared in the printed copy of his evidence were absolutely wide of what he had actually said.

Another delegate asked Mr Smith if it was not a fact that certain politicians had succeeded in having him (Mr Smith) elected to the Legislative Council because they were afraid he would divulge certain facts implicating them to the ballot box matter?

Mr Smith: In fairness to the politicians, let me say that I was elected to the Upper House by the late Mr John Storey. I had “missed the bus”, and was only the runner-up in the caucus’s selection, so there can be no truth in the alleged statement.

Mr T Liston (North Shore ALP branch) asked Mr Smith whether Mr Sproule at the time he consulted him was a member of the Legal Aid Department.

Mr Smith (holding up a letter): Yes; here is the letter, and it is written on the official paper of the department.
Mr Liston: Well, I want to ask Mr Willis whether he ascertained whether there is a copy of the letter in the department, and the date on which it was written.

Mr Willis said they had asked all the questions and made all the inquiries considered necessary. Mr Sproule stated that in his then position as a member of the Labour party he frequently advised any members who had asked him for advice. He (Mr Sproule) had received a letter from Mr Smith asking for his opinion as a lawyer and a friend and he replied as a friend. It was not an official reply as an officer of the Legal Aid Department.

Mr Smith: His letter was marked strictly confidential.

Mr Last (AWU): Did Mr Willis, as chairman of the investigation committee, consult experts to ascertain the age of the letter?

Mr Willis: There was no need, because I knew of it at the time it was written. (Cries of “Oh, oh,” and uproar.) Mr Willis added, “You had expelled me, and I was waiting my time”. (Disorder.)

Several delegates attempted to raise points of order and make personal explanations, but amidst intense excitement a motion that the question be put to the Conference was carried.

When order was restored Mr Lang, MLA, asked the chairman whether, if Conference rejected the portion of the report expelling Mr Smith from the movement for two years, Mr Smith would be completely exonerated.

The chairman answered in the affirmative.

A delegate then tried to move an amendment, but the chairman refused to take it, and Mr Smith made a brief reply.

“All I want to say is that I am in a difficult position”, he said. “There are no extenuating circumstances”.

“My bona fides are established or they are not. I was in it or I was not. It takes a lot of courage to do what I am doing, and I am glad and proud that I have had the courage, in spite of the vilification and persecution, and the attempts to crucify me politically, to stand up to clean this movement of an excrescence”. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

The president then closed the debate. He said that the committee, in imposing the penalty on Mr Smith, had in mind that it was his duty, as an individual member, to expose any corruption regardless of the consequences. The committee knew that he would have been undoubtedly kicked out, but they, as a committee were not in a position to say that any man should be excused. If Mr Smith had done what he himself truly said it would have taken a lot of courage to do, he would have been coming back to the movement instead of going out.

The committee had also in mind that it had been said that the whole matter was a frame up. If it was a frame up, Mr Smith was in it, and he was paying the penalty of being in it. He appealed to the delegates to put
themselves in the position of Mr Smith at the time, asked themselves how they would have acted, and judge him accordingly.

Referring to the fact that some delegates had questioned the authenticity of Mr Smith’s original letter, dealing with his (Mr Smith’s) connection with the matter, Mr Willis said that Miss Matthews had told him (he was out of the movement at the time) of the irregularity and also that Mr Smith had written the letter and taken legal advice at the time.

**Vote Taken**

It was moved and carried “That the question now be put”.

After a division had been taken, the chairman announced that there were 118 votes in favour of the motion and 130 against. The motion was, therefore, declared lost.

The announcement was received with applause and some hoots.

“Thanks, ladies and gentlemen, thanks”, said Mr Smith, as he left the platform.

**Mr Coleman’s Position**

The Conference then considered the paragraph in the report reading: “The committee desires to place on record its utter disapproval of the action of Mr PE Coleman, MP, who, on his own evidence, admits having had in his possession a ballot box knowing same to have a sliding panel. The committee is of the opinion that Mr PE Coleman, MP, committed a grave error in failing to report immediately to the Central Executive, the governing body of the movement”.

Mr Coleman, addressing the Conference, said he had no desire to attack the impartiality of the ballot box committee, because he thought it had endeavoured to deduce the facts from the evidence placed before it. He submitted, however, that the remarks in the committee’s report concerning himself were totally undeserved, and he asked the Conference to remove them. He had never in any way been implicated in any scandal connected with the Sydney selection ballots. When the first ballot was taken he was in England. He did not return till May, 1920, and in February, 1921, he resumed duty as secretary of the Clerical Association.

Proceeding, Mr Coleman explained that in February, 1922, the Clerical Association, in order to conduct an election of officers, borrowed a ballot box from the ALP. After the ballot, one of the scrutineers picked up the box, and the sliding panel fell out of it. It did not, therefore, require any Sherlock Holmes to discover it. On the completion of the ballot he said to the returning officer, “Take the dashed thing back where you received it from”. He did not at that time officially report the matter to the ALP, because it looked like directing their attention to the obvious. How was he to know the ALP was not aware of the condition of the box,
and lent it in error? If it had required some ingenuity to discover the sliding panel it would have had a more sinister meaning. Later on he mentioned the matter to Mr Mahony, MP, Mr Mahony told Mr Dooley, Mr Dooley told Mr Ennis (the then editor of *Labour News*), and Mr Ennis told Mr Carey (general secretary of the ALP). Some time in June Mr Ennis called at his office about the matter, and later he went with Messrs Carey and Ennis to the old ALP offices. He said to Mr Carey: “You don’t mean to say you did not know about the box?” and Mr Carey said he did not. They went into the room where the ballot-boxes were stored, and the box was there with about three inches of the sliding panel sticking out at one end. The ALP did not know of the box’s existence, but they must have lacked powers of observation. (Laughter) Later, he (Mr Coleman) demanded that there should be an immediate inquiry.

A delegate: Yes. Nine months afterwards.

Mr Coleman, in conclusion, said he had not done anything to deserve censure.

**Hostility to Mr Lang**

Mr Lang, MLA, who was sitting in the front of the hall, rose to his feet at this stage and endeavoured to ask the chairman a question. He was received with marked hostility and was greeted with cries of “Sit down. Do you want to whitewash him?” Every time he made an effort to speak several delegates moved “That Mr Lang be no longer heard”, and he was counted out by a section of the Conference. Realising that it would be futile for him to endeavour to ask his question, Mr Lang walked to the platform, and with difficulty had a brief conversation with the chairman. He then resumed his seat amidst renewed disorder.

The chairman said that Mr Lang had requested him to explain the position that would arise if the report was defeated. He desired to say that if the motion was adopted the censure would remain, and that if it were defeated Mr Coleman would be exonerated.

**Vote Taken**

On the motion for the adoption of the paragraph in the report being put it was declared lost on the voices.

Several delegates asked for a division, but the chairman refused on the ground that the voices were so overwhelmingly in favour of the rejection of the motion.

**Mr Minahan’s Case**

Conference then proceeded to deal with the recommendation of the committee that Mr PJ Minahan, MLA, should be expelled for a period of
two (2) years. The committee reported that it was of the opinion that Mr Minahan had been aware that fraudulent ballot boxes were in existence. Mr Minahan had refused to appear and assist the committee in their investigations, and the recommendation was made accordingly.

Mr Minahan said that the statement of facts concerning the correspondence between the committee and himself was correct. If he had thought that he would be penalised for not going before the committee he would certainly have gone. (Laughter) He had not been commanded to appear under rule 32, or he would have known that he would have been compelled to go. He had been surprised to hear that he was expelled for two years for saying nothing. (Laughter)

In fairness to himself and the Conference he should know what had influenced the committee in coming to the decision they did. He wanted a trial immediately (it would only take five minutes), or he would submit his case to the ballot box committee, and give every possible assistance.

The Chairman: Mr Minahan must proceed with his case.

Mr Minahan: That’s the case; I’ve got no more. (Laughter.)

Delegate: Mr Minahan, being a true Labour man and knowing that the committee wished you to attend and clean up the matter, did you not think it your duty to go?

Mr Minahan: I did not refuse. I said I knew nothing about it.

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers): Will the chairman tell the Conference what evidence was adduced before the committee to make it differentiate between the censure passed on Mr Coleman, who, it knew, did know something about the matter, and the sentence of two years against Mr Minahan, when it did not know for sure that he knew anything about it.

The chairman’s reply was drowned in uproar.

Delegate: I want to ask Mr Minahan was he assured before he came here tonight that he would be leniently dealt with?

Mr Minahan (excitedly): That is most unfair. It is not so.

Mr Willis said that courteous letters had been sent to Mr Minahan, asking him to attend, and assist the committee, but beyond replying that he knew nothing about the ballot boxes, he ignored the committee. If Mr Minahan was prepared to submit to Executive control, which he had always advocated, the committee was prepared to meet him. Unless he gave this assurance, Conference would be asked to carry his expulsion.

Mr Minahan, MLA: I never knew for one moment that I was on trial, but I am prepared to go on my trial now.

Mr Willis: That is all we want from you. You are not on your trial, and there is no need for a trial. It is solely a question of ignoring the committee. If you signify that you will obey a summons from the committee, the report will be withdrawn.

Mr Minahan left the platform without giving a specific assurance.

The motion was put to the meeting and was declared lost by a large majority.
The remaining portion of the report, dealing with Mr Farrell, was adopted. It read as follows: “The committee desire to report that up to the present we have been unable to locate the whereabouts of Mr JP Farrell, one of the parties named. We are, therefore, of the opinion that the Executive should give the committee further time for the purpose of giving Mr Farrell an opportunity to state his case to the committee.” The report, as amended, was adopted, and the Conference adjourned shortly before 11 o’clock until 7 o’clock tonight.

Day 5, Wednesday, 23 April 1924

New Rules. Re-organisation

The ALP Conference last evening commenced the consideration of proposed new rules for the government of the New South Wales branch. Three alternative schemes for the election of the State Executive were proposed, and these were still under consideration when the Conference adjourned.

The president (Mr AC Willis) was in the chair.

A Delegate’s Badge

Mr McDonald (Randwick ALP) asked the president whether any action had been taken regarding the action of an unauthorised person in obtaining admittance to the Conference with Mr Lambert’s badge, and, if so, what had been done?

The president: The chairman of the credentials committee (Mr Tyrrell) will answer the question.

Mr Tyrrell said the committee had obtained explanations from Messrs Lambert and Taylor relative to the incident. Mr Lambert said that at seven o’clock on Monday evening he was hurriedly called away, and he gave the badge to Frank Taylor, with instructions to hand it to the alternative delegate when he arrived. Taylor’s statement was that he used the badge in order to obtain admittance, and that he had no intention of voting. (Cries of “Oh, Oh,” and dissent.)

A lady delegate: Taylor was here on Saturday with a badge.

“Election Tickets”

Mr J Flannagan (Coachmakers’ Union) referred to what he said was a ‘ticket’ being ‘run’ in connection with the election of officers. He asked if the president would give Mr Baddeley and other persons whose names appeared on the ‘ticket’ an opportunity of making an explanation, or if the president would give a ruling on the lines of rule 29, which states that
the running of a ticket amongst the delegates at the Conference shall merit the disqualification of the persons concerned.

The president said that personally he refused to look at any tickets, but it appeared that there were three tickets in circulation. Any persons affected could make any statement they liked.

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA, said he did not know anything about the ticket referred to by Mr Flannagan, and whoever had placed his name on it had done so without his authority. In view of what had happened he desired to withdraw his name from all positions for which he had been nominated.

Mr T Falkingham (Boilermakers’ Union) said he also wanted to withdraw from all ballots. His name was on the AWU ticket without his authority.

The president, in reply to a question, said no one had any authority to place his name on any ticket. He did not belong to, nor was he the nominee of, any faction.

The Unemployed

Mr F Spillman was permitted to address the delegates on behalf of the unemployed and vigorously directed his remarks against the Labour Parliamentary representatives, who, on the day of the arrival of the British Naval Squadron had, he said, ignored a request to lead an unemployed demonstration, and had taken part in the official proceedings. (Applause) He appealed to the delegates to organise meetings in their own districts to direct attention to the matter.

Mr Dalley (Miscellaneous Workers’ Union) moved that a collection be taken up immediately for the unemployed – (Cries of “Cut it out”.) - and handed to Mr Spillman, the representative of the unemployed. (Laughter and disorder.)

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers’ Union) seconded the motion, but considered it should go further. It was a curious thing that they did not see unemployed immigrants. Apparently there was some system for providing immigrants with work, and they got priority.

Mr O’Brien (Painters’ Union) said that if they resolved to purchase only Australian made goods, unemployment would disappear within two or three years. It was useless to have the men begging that night, and sleeping in the Domain the following night.

Senator Grant moved, as an amendment, that the money collected should be handed to Mr J Garden.

Mr Shirley (Printing Trades) opposed the proposal to take up a collection as he said that this would not solve the unemployment problem. He asserted that any man who slept in the Domain in any place where there were Government institutions in existence, was in his proper place. (Dissent.) He was not speaking in a derogatory way of those who
slept in the Domain, but he contended it was the duty of the unemployed, whatever Government was in power, to surrender themselves to the nearest police station, and the Government would then soon find them work.

The amendment, “That a collection be taken and the money handed to Mr Garden for distribution”, was carried.

Miss Annie Golding moved, “That the Fuller Government be approached and asked to provide food, blankets, and clothes for the starving families of the unemployed during the winter months”.

The motion, which was seconded by another woman delegate, was carried.

**New Rules**

Mr C Magrath submitted to the Conference proposed new rules for the New South Wales branch of the ALP, and formally moved their adoption.

With regard to the composition of the Executive, he explained that it was proposed that the existing rule, which states that the Executive shall consist of “a president, two vice-presidents, and 30 members” elected at the annual Conference should be replaced by a new rule, stating that the Executive shall consist of a president, two vice-presidents, the general secretary, and 30 members, elected at the annual Conference, “together with one member of the Federal Parliamentary Labour party, and two members of the State Parliamentary Labour party”. The Parliamentary members to be elected by each of the parties interested.

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers) commenced the debate on the amendment of the rules governing the constitution of the Executive by moving the following resolution: “That the Executive shall consist of 32 members, including secretary and president, and shall be constituted as follows: Ten delegates, including president and secretary, to be elected by the Conference; three women delegates, to be elected by women delegates; one member each to be elected by the State and Federal group; four country members, representing north, south, east, and west, to be elected by country delegates; the remaining to be elected by the affiliated unions on the following group basis: AWU, Building Trades, Food Workers, Manufacturing, Mining, Miscellaneous, Printing, Non-manual Workers, Public Utilities, Transportation (land and sea), and Wool Workers.

Speaking to the motion Mr Falkingham said that in his opinion the fact that the Executive was elected by the Conference was the real cause of the corruption in the movement, and this was the best argument why the change should be made.

The president: I realise that this matter is vital to the movement. I think that the scheme should be circulated among the delegates.
Mr Baddeley, MLA, said that the consensus of opinion was that something should be done to amend the constitution. It was clearly imperative that the election of the Executive and the movement generally should be on a different basis to that prevailing at the present time. The advantage to the scheme outlined was that the delegates would be elected by the members of the unions and branches concerned. He moved that a committee of five be appointed to give consideration to the various schemes submitted to the Conference, and to present a comprehensive report to the Conference the following evening, the report to contain recommendations as to which was the best method to be adopted.

Mr Bell (Albury) moved that discussion of the matter be adjourned till the next evening, to permit the country delegates to have their schemes for the alteration of the rules printed and distributed among the delegates, so that they could be considered.

The motion was lost.

Mr Bell then outlined to the Conference the country delegates’ scheme. They proposed, he said, to endeavour to decentralise the movement. Under the present rules it was necessary for delegates to come from the country hundreds of miles to Sydney to attend the annual Conference. If the country members were offered one, two, or twenty seats on the Executive, they could not accept them, because they could not come to attend the meetings in Sydney. It was only the working man who had the time.

A delegate: That’s all we are concerned about – the working man.

(Interuption)

Mr Bell, continuing, said that his proposal, briefly, was that the State should be divided into four provincial districts – one city and three country. Each provincial district would hold its own annual Conference and would have its own Executive and council. This decentralisation would mean that many country matters, which it had been endeavoured, unsuccessfully, for years to bring before the Conference, would receive consideration. The State Conference would be composed of 108 delegates, of which 36 would be selected by the city district, 12 from each of the three country districts, and 36 from the affiliated unions. The State Executive would consist of nine delegates, three from the city, three from the country, and three from affiliated unions. Each member of the State and provincial Executives would be subject to recall by the respective provincial councils. Provision would also be made for the establishment of branches and sub-councils according to geographical and other conditions. He was of the opinion that the scheme would have the effect of placing the movement more in the hands of the rank of file than it was at the present time.
Upon the conclusion of Mr Bell’s address, further discussion on the proposals was adjourned till the re-assembling of the Conference at 7 o’clock this evening.

**Election of Officers**

The ballot for the election of officers closed at 11 o’clock last night, and the counting of the votes was commenced at that hour. The result will be announced by the returning officer (Mr Gibbs) at the Conference this evening.

**Day 6, Thursday, 24 April 1924**

**Election of Officers. Militants Defeated**

The result of the ballot for the election of officers was announced at last night’s session of the ALP Conference by the returning officer (Mr W Gibbs).

Mr AC Willis (Miners’ Federation) was re-elected president, defeating Mr BW Sheiles (Clerical Association). The voting was, for Mr Willis 190 votes, for Mr Sheiles 65 votes, informal 37.

The retiring vice-presidents, Mr EC Magrath (Printing Trades) and Mr JJ Tyrrell (Municipal Employees) were also re-elected, Mr Magrath securing 185 votes, and Mr Tyrrell 168. The unsuccessful candidates for vice-presidency were Messrs JC Eldridge (North Shore ALP), 79; Geo Bodkin (AWU), 70; informal 41.

The feature of the election of the State Executive was the defeat of the militant members of last year’s Executive, and the defeat of Mrs Kate Dwyer (of the Women Workers’ Union), who has been a member of the ALP Executive for many years.

**New Executive**

The following thirty members were elected as the State Executive: Messrs TA Burke, 185 votes; D Rees (Miners), 179 votes (re-elected); D Clyne, 175 votes (re-elected); JF O’Reilly (Hairdressers), 172 votes (re-elected); W Carbines (AWU), 170 votes (re-elected); D McLelland (Blacksmiths), 166 votes; Mrs Melville, 165 votes (re-elected); W Mills (Waterside Workers), 164 votes (re-elected); F Conroy, 162 votes (re-elected); WT Padgen, 161 votes; J Culbert (Timber Workers), 160 votes (re-elected); T Doyle (United Labourers), 159 votes (re-elected); JJ Lynch, 156 votes; G Anderson, 152 votes; Miss Johnston, 150 votes (re-elected); C Baines (Liquor Trades), 147 votes; J Connell (Paddington ALP), 146 votes; WJ Butler, 141 votes; J Comans, 141 votes; H Potter, 141 votes; R Stapleton,
141 votes (re-elected); RH Sinclair (Boilermakers), 140 votes; F Roberts, 140 votes; Mrs Fowler, 139 votes (re-elected); WH Thompson, 139 votes; J Kaine, 138 votes; and FE Miller, 135 votes.

Twenty-six candidates for positions on the State Executive were unsuccessful.

**Alternate Executive**

Mrs Dwyer, 103 votes (member last Executive); Messrs JJ Graves, 98 votes (member last Executive); T Falkingham, 91 votes; G McGrath, 87 votes; Miss A Golding, 80 votes; Messrs R Beashel, 78 votes; G Buckland, 72 votes; J Eldridge, 71 votes; T Holloway, 62 votes; JP Sweeney, 62 votes; J White, 61 votes; EC O’Dea, 60 votes; G Rowland, 60 votes; Mrs Bodkin, 59 votes; JM Davoren, 59 votes; T Liston, 58 votes; C Fern, 57 votes; GW Thompson, 57 votes; P Meade, 57 votes; Mesdames J Seery, 56 votes; Dorrington, 56 votes; FE Mortimer, 55 votes; Messrs TP O’Connor, 55 votes; WF Bodkin, 55 votes; T Thick, 54 votes; WJS Carroll, 49 votes; Nurse Francis, 48 votes; Messrs W Harrop, 48 votes; J Walsh, 48 votes; A McAllister, 47 votes.

**Interstate Conference**

The following were elected delegates to the interstate Conference: Messrs AC Willis (Miners), 203 votes; A Blakeley (AWU), 186; EC Magrath (Printers), 184; JF O’Reilly (Hairdressers), 184; JJ Tyrrell (Municipal Employees), 176; and TJ Lonergan, 165. The following were the unsuccessful candidates: Mrs K Dwyer, 101 votes; EC O’Dea (Shop Assistants), 82; GH Buckland (AWU), 76; TP Holloway (AWU), 66; T Liston (North Shore ALP), 65.

**Informalities**

The returning officer stated that during the election Mr EC O’Dea had complained that he had been nominated for election as a delegate to the Federal Executive, and that his name had been omitted from the ballot papers. Upon making investigations it was ascertained that Mr O’Dea’s statement was correct. Consequently the votes had not been counted, and unless Mr O’Dea withdrew his objection it would be necessary to hold a fresh election of delegates to the Federal Executive. The returning officer added that the large number of informal votes was due to the fact that in the majority of cases the voters deliberately made their papers informal.
Executive’s Report

Mr F Conroy (Executive) obtained the suspension of the standing orders to move that the portions of the Executive’s report not already dealt with should be adopted.

The adoption was carried on the voices.

The portions of the report thus adopted dealt with the formation of new branches and the affiliation of additional unions during the year, the attendances at Executive meetings, the adjustment of boundaries, the Eden-Monaro inquiry, the Equity suit in regard to art unions, the training of speaking teams, Domain meetings and propaganda meetings, Conferences between the Executive and Parliamentary members, the cessation of publication of the party’s weekly newspaper, the Labour News, and the purchase of the Daily Mail, and a section emphasising the desirability (in view of the probability of a State general election) of “closing up the ranks”, composing any outstanding personal differences, and eliminating anything likely to lead to internecine strife, and the balance sheet.

New Rules

The debate on the alternative schemes for the election and constitution of the Executive was resumed. At the outset a determined effort was made by the advocates of the Trades and Labour Council “group” scheme to have the scheme propounded on behalf of the country delegates taken as the first amendment, and the “group” scheme as the second. In this way the “group” scheme advocates would have been able to vote with the country delegates to defeat the Executive proposals. When these were disposed of they would have had a better opportunity of having the constitution emanating from the Trades and Labour Council finally adopted.

The chairman firmly opposed the contention and insisted on the “group” scheme being taken as the first amendment, it having been moved as an amendment before the country delegates’ scheme on Wednesday evening.

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers’ Union), speaking in advocacy of the group system of electing the Executive, said that it was similar to the scheme adopted under the present constitution of the Trades and Labour Council. Each industry would be grouped and would be given direct control, and as a result there would be more cohesion between the industrial and political sections of the movement.

A delegate: What about the unions that are not affiliated with the Trades and Labour Council? Will they have representation?

Mr Falkingham: Yes, they will go in just the same. Continuing, he said that the scheme, if adopted, would bring about closer cooperation
between the men on the spot. Affiliated unions would have a direct say in the election of the Executive.

Mr Baddeley, MLA, said he was under the impression that the Executive had submitted a scheme, that Mr Bell had moved an amendment on behalf of the country delegates, and that Mr Falkingham had moved a second amendment.

The chairman: Very well.

Mr Falkingham denied that he had moved an amendment the previous evening. The only motion moved was that a committee be appointed.

Mr R Rutherford (Leather Trades) asked what was meant by “Public Utilities”?

Mr Falkingham said it embraced municipal employees.

Miss Annie Golding (Women Workers) said that as women represented half of the community they should have been conceded at least half of the representation on the Council and the Executive.

Mr Falkingham admitted that the women were doing splendid organising work. He pointed out that the proposition was to give women direct representation – a concession they had never had before. There was nothing to say that any of the other delegates should not be women.

Miss Golding: We have no chance there.

Mr Bell said that the amendment moved by Mr Falkingham cut out the country people to a large extent, and if they continued the Conference for a few years under existing conditions there would be very few country delegates coming down to the Conference at all. In selecting country delegates the first thing they had to decide was who would spare time to travel 300 or 400 miles, and in some cases pay their own expenses. That was a wrong and most undemocratic system. The amendment he was moving, that the State should be divided into four provincial districts – each to hold its own Conference – would have a rejuvenating effect on the movement. The scheme outlined by Mr Falkingham would cripple the movement. The trouble was that under the existing system the Executive was chosen by cityites, who became so familiar with one another that corruption crept in. (Voices: They fall out.) Mr Bell said that unless a change was made they would soon be called upon again to clean up the movement.

Mr Donald Grant (Paddington ALP) strongly supported the country delegates’ scheme. The men in the country had to be considered if the movement was to achieve success. For years they had ignored the position, but at last, he believed, they had got a scheme that would help them. It was decidedly better than the present system.

Mr T Holloway (AWU) said he was going to oppose both the schemes that had been submitted. There was nothing democratic about the last proposition – it was autocratic. Upon inquiry from the general secretary, he had ascertained that there were approximately 35,000 ALP
league members in the movement, while the members of affiliated unions numbered considerably over 100,000. While there were three times as many union members as there were league members in the movement, however, it was now proposed that the league members should be given twice as much representation as the affiliated union members. The union members did just as much for the movement as the league members. (Dissent) The expression of the leagues was only the expression of the unions redebated, as every member of a league was a member of a union.

Mr Hagon (Namoi) answered the objections raised by Mr Holloway. He said that although the leagues contained only 35,000 members, they had 111 delegates in Conference, whereas the unions had 185. The maximum representation that could be attained by the metropolitan and country league members was 123, whereas the industrialists, if they organised all unionists, and had them affiliated with the movement, could have approximately 605 delegates. They all knew about 50 per cent of those affiliated with leagues were not labour at all.

Mr D McLelland (Blacksmiths’ Union) said it was useless to alter the rules unless something better was to be introduced. He considered the Conference, as at present constituted, and representative of the unions, leagues, and the women, was in the best position to elect the Executive.

Executive Attacked

Mr J Mostyn (Electrical Trades), a member of the retiring Executive, in a vigorous speech asserted that there had never been an Executive that had been straightforward to the movement, and when they saw an Executive take control as they had done at the Conference they realised it was time some change took place. (Applause and dissent) Under the present system they had found that it was impossible to get an honest Executive. Under no consideration should they adopt a proposal which would give to the Executive authority to elect the finance committee. The Conference had that night adopted a balance-sheet that the Executive had not even seen until the Wednesday before Conference. They had been told in connection with the ballot boxes and cheques being paid not to the men who had done the work, but to another man. They did not know how they were spending their own money, and it was a scandalous thing. The “group” system was the only solution.

Mr Mostyn, proceeding, strongly criticised the disputes committee which, he said, had impounded the books of one branch, and held them for nine months, while Executive members had gone out and told the rank and file that the men could not be trusted. Had the members of the disputes committee been favourable to the members of the branch concerned, the impounding of the books would never have taken place. (Hear, hear)
Mr George Smith (Executive): After the scurrilous attack Mr Mostyn has made upon members of the Executive — (Uproar.)

The President: The matter before the Conference, Mr Smith, is three schemes regarding the Executive. With 185 delegates, against a total of 123 from the branches, it was foolish for the industrialists to say that the Conference had been packed by the latter. During the year the Executive had received £1399 sustentation fees from the unions, and £300 from the branches.

Mr A Rutherford (Leatherworkers’ Union) said that Mr Bell was on the right track when he advocated the establishment of provincial districts, but he made an error when he attempted to tamper with representation at the State Conference.

Mr Burke (Balmain) supported Mr Bell’s amendment, because he considered that it would drive members of unions into the leagues.

The Vote Taken

An amendment by Miss Golding, providing for one-third representation by women delegates, was defeated on the voices.

Mr Falkingham’s amendment was then put and division forced. It was lost by 129 votes to 111.

Mr Bell’s amendment, providing for the division of the State into four provincial districts, was the next taken, and the country delegates immediately rose in a body and trooped across the hall to join the industrialists amid a deafening clamour from the latter. The count revealed that the amendment was carried by 131 votes to 109.

Uproar ensued, amid which the president shouted: “That leaves you where you were, as you have not a two-thirds majority.” (Cheers and dissent)

When order was restored Mr Holloway’s amendment was put and lost on the voices.

The Conference adjourned until 9.30 this morning.

Day 7, Friday, 25 April 1924

Readmission Applications

Mr Arthur Griffith

The ALP Conference last evening dealt with several applications for readmission to membership.

They included an application by Mr Arthur Griffith, a former Minister for Works, who had been expelled owing to his attitude
regarding the conscription question. The president (Mr Willis) ruled that Mr Griffith could not be readmitted until the rules were altered by a two-thirds majority.

The Conference sat throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening.

**Dr Thompson’s Case**

At the ALP Conference yesterday Mr A Rutherford (Saddlery Trades) obtained the suspension of the standing orders to move that a committee of five should be appointed to collect all information in regard to the Courts’ decision, and other information that could be obtained from Dr Thompson in regard to certain events which had occurred here and in England in connection with the Dr Thompson-Farr case.

He stated that Dr Thompson was indebted for a large sum of expenses. He thought that the Government should pay these expenses. In view of the circumstances, he said, it was the duty of the Conference to see that he was not victimised and deprived of the rights of his profession. The motion was adopted, and a committee, comprising Messrs J O’Brien, S Edwards, Geo Smith, Stewart (Electrical Trades), Mrs Melville, Messrs Anderson and A Rutherford, was appointed.

**The Harbour Bridge**

A letter was received from the Darling Harbour branch, calling attention to the fact that 1500 trade unionists and Labourites would be rendered homeless on account of demolition in connection with the building of the harbour bridge. As no provision was made for them in the Harbour Bridge Act, and in view of the housing shortage, it was asked that the Parliamentary party should be instructed to see that no hardship resulted. The Parliamentary party was instructed in terms of the letter.

**Federal Executive Ballot**

Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants’ Union), signified his intention of contesting the ballot for representation on the Federal Executive (his name having been omitted). Mr Baddeley intimated that he would not be a candidate.

At a later stage the returning officer (Mr W Gibbs) announced that he was prepared to accept Mr Baddeley’s withdrawal if the Conference was agreeable. Mr Baddeley said his action was taken at the instance of his union, because his name had, without his permission, been included on a ticket.

The proposal met with a storm of disapproval from the industrial delegates, who, in the words of Mr O’Dea, recognised in him the one outstanding figure in the industrial movement, and had confidence in
him. Any honourable delegates in the future could be defeated by their names being placed on a ticket.

Mr Donald Grant congratulated Mr Baddeley on bringing the abuse to the forefront. On a vote being taken, Mr Baddeley was permitted to withdraw from the ballot.

A fresh ballot was taken and in the evening the returning officer announced the result as follows: W Carbines 135 votes (elected), PV Stokes 127 (elected), BW Sheiles 73, EC O’Dea 68, AH Noate 31, informal 5.

**Wireless Telegraphy**

The Conference adopted two resolutions from the Bondi branch as follows: “That the time has arrived when the position of wireless telephony and telegraphy should be reviewed, with a view to removing the restrictions which are now strangling the science and preventing its advantageous development”, and “that special consideration be given to affording every possible facility for its encouragement in the rural areas of the Commonwealth”.

**Mr Charlton’s Address**

When the Conference reassembled in the afternoon it was addressed by the leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party (Mr Mat Charlton, MP).

Mr Charlton referred to the Labour victories in the elections in Western Australia and South Australia, and to the accession to power of a Labour Government in Tasmania. Labour, he said, held power in Tasmania today because the people who had made the mess there were afraid to go to the electors, knowing full well that if they did a Labour Government would be returned. He had visited a number of the States since he had last addressed a Conference in Sydney, and it was very apparent to him that Labour’s strength was growing very fast. Western Australia after the recent war trouble was the most disrupted State in Australia, but at the last Federal elections Labour had succeeded in getting one seat in the House of Representatives and two Senate seats, and today Labour had a fine working majority in the State Parliament. He wished they could get the same enthusiasm in New South Wales and the other States as he had found in Western Australia. (Applause.) There he had found the people imbued with the enthusiasm that had prevailed in the early days of the movement. South Australia at the State elections had been true to the Federal vote, but the Labour majority had grown since that vote. Today they had to be on the look out. Speaking at the Sydney Show the other day, Mr Bruce had intimated that if he was unable to come to a satisfactory arrangement with the Country party he would have to take another course. It was very evident that the proposals
Mr Bruce had made public on that occasion had been for the purpose of appeasing that party. They might perhaps be having an election before this year expired. The Federal Parliament held the key to the situation, because that Parliament only could give the people of the Commonwealth uniform legislation in the interests of the masses. They should be ready if the call came, and he urged, as far as New South Wales was concerned, that they should forget their little differences of the past, work as one party and one body, and cease their bickering, and get back to the conditions that existed in the early days of the movement, when every man in their ranks stood for the cause that they espoused. If they did that, there would be nothing to prevent their achieving success. They would then win not only in the Federal sphere, but in the States. Any criticism they had they should not level at themselves. Let them level it at those who were fighting them, not at their own people. (Hear, hear) It was idle to talk about “union is strength” and “united we stand, divided we fall”, if they did not put these things into practice. If there were any troubles in the movement that Conference was the place to bring them for settlement. If they worked together unitedly Labour would not only secure a majority in the New South Wales Parliament, but a big working majority in the Federal Parliament. (Applause)

Mr W Mills (Waterside Workers) asked if Mr Charlton and his party, when returned to power, would take steps to deal with the “Inchcape combine”, and “non-union bureaux on the waterfront”?

Mr Charlton: We will do everything possible in accordance with our platform.

Mr Charlton, answering a question respecting the Communists, said they had to be guided by the majority and whatever the majority of the working class movement, which was the Labour movement, decided, they must stand by. They could not have an alliance with another body of different political thought, and with separate propaganda, if they wanted to make headway. Could they expect people to follow them if they did? That Conference was the Parliament of Labour. What that Conference decided, members of the party had to advocate, and it was the decisions of that Conference that must guide every section of the movement if they were to have success. (Applause)

Another delegate asked if Mr Charlton would undertake that the Federal Labour party would draw up a concise scheme for the sugar industry to take control out of the hands of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

Mr Charlton said that they had to be guided by the Interstate Conference of the party, but they would deal with the question on its merits, guided by the advice of Mr Frank Forde, MP, who knew the sugar question from A to Z.
Night Baking

Mr E Dalley (Eastern Suburbs ALP) having secured the suspension of the standing orders, moved: “That the Conference pledges itself to support the operative bakers, both financially and morally, in their fight against night baking, and that it be an instruction from the Conference to the Bread Carters’ Union to support the operative bakers in the dispute, otherwise it recommends the withdrawal by the Conference of the Bread Carters’ Union from the party.”

Mr Dalley said that the master bakers in Newcastle, with the assistance of the Employers’ Federation, were endeavouring to reintroduce night baking. The operative bakers were fighting them, and he thought that the bread carters should be compelled to join the operatives in the fight.

A delegate who seconded the motion severely criticised the officials of the Bread Carters’ Union in Sydney for having failed to support the operative bakers during the recent strike.

Mr H Gray (Bread Carters’ Union), replying to the criticism of his organisation, outlined the developments that led up to the recent strike, and attacked the attitude taken up towards the bread carters by the Labour Council, which had recommended that his union be expelled from the Trades Hall, Mr Garden (secretary to the Labour Council) was, he said, out of Sydney at the time, but upon his return he signed a report drawn up by people who did not know what they were talking about. Some time previously, a meeting of 400 bread carters refused to allow Mr Garden to address them. He (Mr Gray) realised now why that was, and he thought they were justified. Garden was nothing more nor less than an economic oddity. (Uproar) The bread carters had been accused of fraternising with the employers, but there was no union that had prosecuted the employers more than the bread carters had. They had acted in the recent dispute in accordance with the principles of trades unionism. (Hear, hear.)

Mr Normal Byrnes (Operative Bakers) sarcastically said that he wished to congratulate the officials of the Bread Carters’ Union “for the magnificent fight they had just put up for the boss”.

Mr Connell, MLA, suggested that the latter part of the motion be amended so that, instead of recommending the withdrawal of the Bread Carters’ Union affiliation with the ALP, it would urge that an appeal be made to the carters in the Newcastle district to continue to support the operative bakers in their fight to retain day baking.

A delegate moved that Mr Garden be allowed to address the Conference, as his name had been mentioned. This proposal was vigorously opposed by a section of the delegates, and as vigorously supported by another section. Eventually it was put to the vote, and the Conference decided to hear Mr Garden.
Mr Garden dealt at length with the attitude taken up by the Labour Council in the recent dispute, and he vigorously denounced the officials of the Bread Carters’ Union for failing to move the operatives.

The motion moved by Mr Dalley was altered as suggested by Mr Connell, MLA, and was then carried.

**Credentials**

The credentials committee reported at the morning session that it had credentialled Mr MA Davidson, MLA, against whom objection had been raised by Mr Holloway (AWU). The chairman of the committee (Mr Tyrrell) said that a member of Parliament had the right to join a league in his electorate, even if he did not reside there, and although Mr Davidson was at Dulwich Hill he was entitled to represent the Barrier. Dissent from this ruling was moved by Mr Holloway.

Mr Davidson: Unlike Mr Holloway, I do not take advantage of my right to triple franchise. I wanted my vote to be effective, and hearing what I did of “Bongo” I knew it would not be effective in the AWU.

On a division, the credentials committee’s report was defeated by 94 votes to 89.

During the afternoon session the matter of credentials was again referred to by Mr Holloway and other delegates, who sought to discuss protests in regard to the western suburbs and other districts.

Mr Tyrrell, who was presiding at the Conference during the afternoon, ruled them out of order, stating that the whole of the credentials committee’s report had been dealt with in the morning, and could not be again discussed.

Uproar followed this announcement, a large section of the delegates contending that an undertaking had been given from the chair in the morning that the matters would be discussed. Allegations were made that Mr Tyrrell and other members of the credentials committee were deliberately endeavouring to prevent legitimate protests being discussed and properly dealt with and motions dissenting from the chairman’s ruling were moved from several parts of the hall, while supporters of the credentials committee attempted to prevent the movers persisting with them.

After further uproar and disorder, a motion dissenting from the ruling of Mr Tyrrell was moved and carried, and he vacated the chair in favour of the other vice-president, Mr Magrath.

Mr Magrath, after hearing all parties in explanation of their viewpoints, referred to the records of the morning’s proceedings taken by the minute secretary (Senator Grant). These confirmed the view taken by Mr Tyrrell that the whole of the credentials committee’s report had been dealt with in the morning.
Announcing that he must abide by the official record of the minute secretary, Mr Magrath was greeted with a storm of protest from delegates, many of them rising and refusing to resume their seats, while others proceeded to “count them out”.

After trying in vain to restore order, Mr Magrath, at 4.55 pm declared the Conference adjourned till 7 o’clock in the evening.

**Russian Reconstruction**

When the Conference reassembled in the evening, with the president (Mr Willis) in the chair, the standing orders were suspended to permit Mr Hercsovici to address the delegates on behalf of Workers’ International Relief and Reconstruction Joint Labour Committee. He stated that branches of the committee have been established in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria, and appealed to the Conference to endorse the work of the committee, and to instruct the branches and unions to give it support. Mr D Clynes (Executive) moved a resolution to give the moral and practical support of the Conference to the committee and its work.

A delegate: Don’t you realise the conditions here are equally as bad as in Russia? (Uproar.)

The president appealed to the delegates to separate the two issues. “This is not a case of Bolshevism, Communism, or anything of the kind. It is something that must permeate the whole world. When the workers get the idea that it is they who must undertake the reconstruction of the world they will progress. This is not a movement to destroy the world, but to appeal to the brains of the working class to build it up on new and better lines”.

The motion was carried.

**Personal Explanation**

Mr Davidson, MLA, in a personal explanation in regard to the rejection of his credentials, disclaimed any sinister intentions, and stated that in the extraordinary circumstances of his case similar credentials had been accepted since he entered Parliament.

**Mr Grant’s Membership**

The president ruled that in terms of the decision of the All-Australian Trade Union Congress, Mr Donald Grant is a member of the ALP, with full continuity of membership.
Blind Institution

The following resolution was carried unanimously: “That the State Labour party nationalise the affairs of the Sydney Industrial Blind Institution, subject to the provisions of direct union representation on the governing board. Further, that the minimum living wage prevailing in the State be paid to all adult blind workers.”

Readmission Claimed

Mr SJ Hurst addressed the Conference in support of his application for readmission to membership of the party, it having been decided that he was ineligible for membership for a period of four years because he had opposed the endorsed Labour candidate at Granville (Mr JT Lang). Mr Hurst said he admitted this fact.

Upon a division being taken, 132 delegates voted in favour of Mr Hurst’s readmission and 105 against it, and the president declared the motion carried.

A delegate asked if a two-thirds majority was not required by the rules to grant the readmission.

The president ruled that it was not, in view of precedents laid down.

Mr EC Magrath moved a motion of dissent. The rules, he said, stated definitely that any member or ex-member opposing a selected candidate should be expelled for four years.

The president said he had ruled on precedent, as members had previously been readmitted on the same basis by a simple majority decision.

Upon a division, the Conference, by 134 votes to 104, sustained the president’s ruling.

Mr Geo Smith (Executive) said there were a number of appeals against expulsion from the movement. Seeing that the Conference was in such a forgiving mood that evening, he had much pleasure in moving that all the names be read out, and they all be considered. (Loud cheers)

The president: I can’t accept the motion. The next on the list is the application of Mr Arthur Griffith.

Mr Griffith, in applying for readmission, said that he had been out of the movement for a period of seven years, and that during that period he had not attempted, like others who had been expelled, to throw stones at the movement. He had not joined any other political organisation, and had supported the principles and candidature of Labour nominees in elections. At the time of his expulsion the platform had been silent on the question of conscription, and, as the State party to which he belonged had not defined a policy on the matter, he had considered that each member was free to vote as he wished. He himself had voted on that occasion believing it was right. The Labour platform now was opposed
to conscription as a plank of its platform and if he was admitted he would adhere to it, as every member of the party must adhere to the platform even if it be against his own judgment. He still believed that the salvation of the world would come only by the transference to the workers of the means of production.

Mr EC Magrath (vice-president) asked Mr Griffith had he opposed the selected Federal member at Newcastle and the State member at Annandale, subsequent to his expulsion.

Mr Griffith answered both in the affirmative, saying that in the first case he had run as Independent Labour and refuted Nationalist support, and in the second that he had been expelled illegally at the time and still held the selection. He had given an assurance on that occasion to record his vote, if elected, with the Labour party.

Mr Magrath then submitted that Mr Griffith’s appeal should not be entertained in terms of the follow rule: “Any member of parliament or conscriptionists candidate expelled for advocating conscription shall not at any time, under any pretext be readmitted to membership in the Labour movement.”

The president: The clear meaning of that is life expulsion. You can only alter that by a two-thirds majority.

A delegate: Have not other conscriptionists been readmitted, including Mr Roddis?

The president: This refers specifically to members of Parliament who were advocates of conscription. It is in hard cold English.

Delegate: So was the other rule.

The president: This rule was rightly or wrongly (sometimes I think wrongly) put there specifically to deal with this particular issue.

Delegate: In regard to Mr Bramston’s case you ruled there could be no life expulsion.

The president: That is so. Conference is master of its own business, and you can change it by a two-thirds majority.

Mrs Melville moved dissent from the president’s ruling. The Conference, she said, had as much right to break one rule as it had to break another.

The president said he contended that the rule in question was put into the rule book to meet specific cases, such as that of Mr Arthur Griffith. The rule was definite, and before anything could be done there would have to be a two-thirds majority to “wipe out” the rule.

Upon a show of hands being taken the president’s ruling was upheld by a very large majority, and no application was taken regarding Mr Griffith’s application.

Mr H Lestrange, of North Sydney, applied for readmission to the ALP. He explained that in 1914 he was an organiser for the AWU and in April of that year, at Wagga, he advised some chaffcutters who were on strike to go back to work. For this he was suspended by the committee of
the central branch of the AWU, but in the same year he was endorsed as
the selected Labour candidate for Eden-Monaro. In 1918 the ALP
Executive, after calling upon him for an explanation, expelled him from
the movement for the action he had taken at Wagga four years
previously. In 1918, in the election campaign, he had spoken against Mr J
Bailey, the endorsed Labour candidate for Goulburn, but he had spoken
against him personally more than he had spoken against the Labour
party, and he had not done anything detrimental to the party’s interests
since.

On the motion of Mr BW Sheiles, it was agreed, on the voices, that
Mr LeStrange be readmitted.

Mr Lazzarini, MP, stated the case for re-admission for Messrs
Strange, Yates and Smith, former members of the Goulburn branch of
the ALP, who were expelled as the result of a meeting of censure of the
1919 Executive, held in connection with the selections for the State
elections at that period. On the motion of Mr Baddeley, the three
appellants were readmitted with continuity of membership. A sus-
pension imposed by the Auburn league on Mr Kirkoff one of its former
members, was also removed.

The Conference adjourned until 2 o’clock today.

Day 8, Saturday, 26 April 1924

Alleged Forgery. Mr J White’s Statement. Communists Excluded

The annual Conference of the ALP was concluded at the Trades Hall on
Saturday night.

Mr J White, an ex-organiser of the AWU, repeated allegations of
forgery and other statements in regard to AWU tickets that he made at
the previous Conference, and it was decided that the matter should be
inquired into by the ALP.

Reports regarding the future relationship of Communists to the ALP
were received from the committee appointed to inquire into the matter.
The Conference, by 135 votes to 108, rejected a proposal which would
have given Communists the right to enter the ALP as individuals, and
adopted the committee’s majority report recommending “all workers” to
support the ALP as one party, and recommending the incoming Execu-
tive to hold a further Conference “with a view to achieving unity”.

When the Conference reassembled in the afternoon Mr Allen
(Balmain) moved that the Conference should express its appreciation of
the new official organ of the movement, and call upon the rank and file
to give it a full measure of support. The motion was carried on the
voices.


**District Assemblies**

After a debate on the recent formation of a northern district assembly by ALP branches in the Newcastle district, the following was carried on the motion of Mr Baddeley, MLA: “Where it is desired by ballot of the affiliated unions and leagues, any district shall make provision for the formation of a body which shall act in accordance with the constitution of the ALP”.

**Continuity of Membership**

Mr Norman Byrnes (Operative Bakers) applied to be granted continuity of membership in the movement in accordance with the resolutions of the All-Australian Trades Union Congress. He stated that he was a member of the Auburn branch of the ALP in 1919, and was declared by the then president (Mr Lambert) to be officially out of the movement because he had associated himself with the “1919 breakaways”. In January, 1921, he contested a municipal by-election at Auburn as an Independent, opposing the selected Labour candidate. He was subsequently re-admitted to the movement, but without continuity of membership.

It was resolved that Mr Byrnes be re-admitted with full continuity of membership.

**Recall of Parliamentarians**

Mr Tannock (St George ALP) moved: “Candidates before endorsement by the general Executive shall sign and place in the hands of the general Executive an undated resignation. Any candidate or Parliamentary member who refuses to execute the mandates of the party, or its controlling body, shall be immediately recalled and his resignation as member sent in”.

The mover vigorously attacked the Labour Government. They had, he said, appointed as Speaker, Mr Dan Levy, “one of the most reactionary Tories that ever sat in a Speaker’s chair”. Once they had got a Speaker they raised their own salaries. The mover also asserted that the Labour members had broken their pledge to the rank and file of the movement with regard to the seniority lists in the railway and tramway service after the 1917 strike. While a Labour Government was in power the bonus system, which he characterised as “the most sweating system ever introduced”, was introduced in the railway service, while men were walking the streets not knowing where to look for their next meal. He asserted that Labour members were doing nothing to bring about the socialisation of industry or the abolition of the Upper House.

The motion was carried on a show of hands by the two-thirds majority necessary to effect the desired alteration in the party’s rules.
Serious Allegations

Mr Jack White, an ex-AWU organiser, applied to the Conference for the investigation of allegations regarding “faked” AWU tickets. He stated that at the last ALP Conference he made specific charges against Mr J Bailey, MLA, and they were referred for investigation to the AWU. Since that time the AWU suspended him for a certain thing he did 22 years previously, at a time when he was looking for work. Since he made charges against Mr Bailey, Mr Bailey had done all he could to prove him a “scab”. When he (Mr White) joined the AWU, however, Mr Bailey said that a man could not be blamed for things he had done in his youth, because he (Mr Bailey) had done the same thing in 1889. ( Interruption. )

Continuing, Mr White said that the AWU conducted an investigation into the charges he made at the last Conference regarding Mr Bailey and “faked” AWU tickets, and dismissed the charges; but as he (Mr White) was in hospital at the time, he heard none of the evidence, and he knew nothing of the evidence, which covered 142 sheets of foolscap paper until the night before the decisions of the AWU were announced. When the copy of the evidence was placed before him, he immediately moved that the matter be postponed, so that he could obtain sworn evidence in rebuttal, but the AWU would not agree to this, and decided to dismiss his charges.

Continuing, Mr White said that he was in a position to prove by the sworn evidence of three witnesses that a certain declaration was not true. When he (Mr White) had come down from Leeton, about 12 months ago, a selection ballot was in progress and Mr Bailey asked him to vote for Mr George Buckland (secretary of the Central Branch of the AWU), and he said to him, “If Buckland gets into Parliament you will be all right for the secretaryship, Jack”. ( Uproar )

The president asked Mr White to confine himself to the point.

Mr White agreed to do so, but added that he could say a lot of things there and prove them. What he had said at the Conference last year he could prove. False badges had been issued while he (Mr White) was in hospital, letters addressed to him, care of the AWU office in the Queen Victoria markets were opened and replied to by some other person or persons.

Mr White then read to the Conference a letter purporting to have been written by him to a Mr W Atkins, which he said was a forgery. The letter referred to a conversation which Mr White was said to have had with Mr Willis regarding a false AWU badge, and requested Mr Atkins to forward the badge in question to Mr White, addressing it to the Castlereagh Street Post Office, in order that it might be used as evidence against Mr Bailey. This letter, Mr White stated, was not written by him, but by someone who forged his name to obtain possession of the false AWU badge. Upon learning of the letter some time later he called at the
Castlereagh Street Post Office, but the badge which had been sent there as a result of the forged letter sent to Mr Atkins was not there, someone else having called and claimed it. The badge had thus been obtained by somebody by means of forgery. Mr Lundie, one of the members of the AWU committee of investigation, acted throughout the AWU inquiry entirely on behalf of Mr Bailey. Mr Lundie for some time refused to know him (Mr White) because he said he (Mr White) was a traitor to the movement but the only thing he (Mr White) had ever done was to help Mr T J Smith to exonerate himself in regard to the “frame-up” charging him (Mr Smith) with stealing AWU tickets. By doing that he (Mr White) sacrificed his own position as an organiser for the AWU. He knew that if he helped Mr Smith he would be likely to lose his job, and he had lost it.

The president (Mr Willis) said that the statements referring to him in the letter read by Mr White were quite untrue. The letter was a pure forgery written for the purpose of getting possession of the false AWU badge. Mr White’s request to the Conference was the same as he had made to the previous Conference – that the ALP Executive should investigate the matter of the AWU tickets, for the purpose of putting him (Mr White) right in the movement.

It was resolved that the ALP Executive be instructed to investigate the matter.

The Communists

The Conference received reports from the committee appointed on the previous Saturday to investigate the position of the Communists and the ALP, “with a view to consolidating the movement”. The committee consisted of Messrs EC Magrath and A Blakeley, MP (representing the ALP’s views), and Messrs J Beasley and J Kilburn (representing the Communists’ views), with Mr R Sumner of Queensland (Federal president of the ALP) as chairman. A majority report and a minority report were submitted to the Conference.

The majority report, which was signed by Messrs Magrath and Beasley [Blakeley?] and the chairman, was as follows: “Your committee, having examined several witnesses, both State and Federal, and having deliberated upon the position as between the Communists and the ALP, is of opinion that the ALP is broad enough to embrace all phases of working class thought, and that in view of the probability of early elections, both State and Federal, and the urgent necessity for all working-class parties cooperating with the ALP, to insure that Labour Governments are elected in order that the serious problems of unemployment, the chaotic financial position of the Commonwealth, and the extremely grave attacks which are being made upon the unions, should be effectively met, appeals to all workers to support the ALP in the coming fight, not as several parties, but as one. Further, we recommend
that the incoming Executive meet all working class parties with a view to achieving unity, and that to any committee of its own members that it appoints it shall be empowered to add Messrs Beasley and Kilburn.”

The minority report, which was signed by Messrs Beasley and Kilburn, was as follows: “This committee, after fully reviewing the whole case, affirms the decision of Conference that the Communist party cannot affiliate with the ALP. We believe that the ALP is wide enough to embrace all working class thought. We therefore recommend that all persons who sign the following pledge be admitted to membership:- ‘I hereby pledge myself to the ALP to faithfully uphold to the best of my ability its constitution and platform, and to work and vote for the selected Labour candidates. I also affirm that I am not a member of any other organisation which pledges its members to support candidates for any public office.’”

The chairman of the committee (Mr Sumner), addressing the Conference, said that his opinion was that the whole matter should be referred to the coming Interstate Conference of the ALP, for the purpose of arriving at one decision to apply to all the States.

Mr Magrath moved the adoption of the majority report. He quoted at length from the rules and programme of the Communist party to show that they were not in agreement with those of the ALP, and said that there must be a definite agreement between the two parties before their could coalesce.

Mr Beasley moved the adoption of the minority report. He submitted that the majority report had shelved the question. The pledge set out in the minority report was good enough for the ALP in Victoria, and what was wrong with its being good enough for the ALP in this State? (Applause.)

Upon the motion for the adoption of one or other of the reports of the committee being put to the Conference, the voting was in favour of the majority report, 135; in favour of the minority report, 108.

The president accordingly declared the majority report of the committee carried.

The Conference then adjourned sine die.
There was no Annual Conference in 1925, nor was an Executive Report presented for the previous year. Instead, an Executive Report for the combined years of 1924-25 was presented to the next Conference in 1926. In that Report can be found the official explanation for the abandonment of the 1925 Conference:

“Postponement of Conference

Because of pending State elections, and a probably early Federal election, the Executive deemed it advisable to postpone, and later annul, the 1925 Conference.

Circumstances necessitating this action were unique, and very probably will never occur again. The State elections were held on 30th May, and had the Conference been called at Easter a number of candidates for Parliament, and many officers of Councils and Branches would have had their organising work, then in full swing, interrupted. The finances of many country Branches would also have been depleted, as the cost of sending delegates to the city is heavy. The Executive felt that it could, with benefit to the Movement, postpone the date of Conference until June, but this month proved wholly unsuitable owing to the results of the State Elections not being finalised until the month was nearly out. The second half of 1925 was full of political uncertainty by reason of a dispute between the Federal Country Party, led by Mr Stewart, and the Nationalists. An election threatened early in August, but was averted after some weeks of finessing.

As the life of the Federal Parliament was nearly run it was known that an election was not far distant, and that the Nationalist Party were frantically seeking a favorable opening. This came through the shipping strike. An election campaign was immediately precipitated and the election took place on 14th November. The Christmas and New Year holidays were deemed unsuitable for many reasons.

The Executive takes this opportunity of refuting the contention that it had something to gain by not calling a Conference. Indeed, the fact that under its guidance the City Council Election and the State Election had been won should have induced it to want to meet delegates. That which was best in the interest of the Movement was done, as consideration of all the facts, and the present position of the Movement, will show.

Special Conference Requisitioned

Shortly after the 1924 Annual Conference had disbanded an agitation was started by some Unions for a Special Conference, to be held to consider the
abolition of selection ballots, and the Executive decided to hold a Conference on the 30th August, 1924. After further consideration it was resolved not to proceed with the holding of such Conference.

Your Executive decided to ascertain the authority of the Unions which had petitioned it, and after waiting some time received replies from 21 Unions. Of this number eight were satisfactory and thirteen quite unsatisfactory. In view of this condition, and also because of the fact that only one of the 25 Electorate Councils whose province it is to conduct selection ballots had supported the petition, it was apparent that there was no urgent or bona-fide need for a Conference.”

That explanation was only part of the truth. It was certainly important that 1925 was an election year for the Commonwealth and the State. However, elections had never resulted in the abandonment of an Annual Conference before this one. In 1910, for example, a very full Conference business paper was discussed while the State election was imminent and the Federal election due at any moment. The other part of the story was that the previous years had been extremely stormy in the NSW Branch of the ALP. Out of the chaos of 1923 JT Lang had been elected leader of the parliamentary party, with the support of a group of unions led by the Miners’ Federation presided over by AC Willis. Although 1924 saw some consolidation of control by that faction, there was fierce opposition from left and right. On the left, the issue of Communism was dominant, with a number of unions bitterly resentful that the ALP had banned card-holding Communists from joining the ALP. On the right, the AWU was still smarting from its replacement as the dominant faction by the Willis coalition of unions. Any Conference in 1925 would have seen very divisive issues aired on the floor. The Executive realized that Lang had a real chance of winning the 1925 election – which he did quite narrowly in May – but he certainly would not have been helped by a stormy Conference before that. It was an indication of the complete domination of the party by the faction controlling the State Executive that Conference could be so easily abandoned even after Lang had been elected.