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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Branch</th>
<th>Date of Formation</th>
<th>Endorsement of Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abermain</td>
<td>25/10/23</td>
<td>16/11/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornsby</td>
<td>14/11/23</td>
<td>1/12/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkesbury</td>
<td>9/6/23</td>
<td>19/6/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangat</td>
<td>11/11/23</td>
<td>16/11/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muswellbrook</td>
<td>1/11/23</td>
<td>16/11/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessnock</td>
<td>13/9/23</td>
<td>21/9/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior</td>
<td>9/10/23</td>
<td>26/10/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Enmore</td>
<td>11/9/23</td>
<td>21/9/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverstone</td>
<td>17/7/23</td>
<td>27/7/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurnell</td>
<td>10/7/23</td>
<td>27/7/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>10/5/23</td>
<td>16/5/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullumbimby</td>
<td>22/8/23</td>
<td>1/9/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Hill Bay</td>
<td>29/7/23</td>
<td>3/8/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teralba</td>
<td>25/7/23</td>
<td>3/8/23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Carbin 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 26, 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 ex-
pelled 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 the question of constructing faked ballot boxes was discussed at a meeting by certain persons who were being supported by Mr Bailey for the Sydney selection. At a previous meeting of those persons Mr Bailey was present when nefarious practices were discussed.

Further, evidence was given by one of the candidates in the selection of the method intended to be adopted in connection with the crook boxes. The boxes were to be brought to Macdonell House, and, after counting had proceeded until 11 o’clock, the Returning Officer was to instruct the scrutineers to sign and seal the boxes and have them placed under lock and key, and that certain persons should come to Macdonell House on Sunday morning and they, having keys to the strongroom, would open the crook boxes and take out the ballot papers and place others in their stead. Evidence in confirmation of such scheme has been given by a late Executive member.

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-
mediately 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,
and “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.

(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.

(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 McClelland, 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 phases 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
LABOR PAINS VOLUME IV

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, Atcher-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 benefited 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 McEllhorne 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 fraternaly, 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 endeavour 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. (Cheers)

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 (Boilermakers), 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 farthermost 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”.

464
“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 authority 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 credentialed 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 Falkingham (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 leagueites. 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 elude 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 Mortimor, 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 Le Strange be readmitted.

Mr Lazzarini, MP, stated the case for re-admission for Messrs Strangman, 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 suspension 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 Executive 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 TJ 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 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.