CHAPTER 2

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

Report in The Australian Worker (and Daily Telegraph)

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

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

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

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

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**Executive Report of ALP, NSW Branch, for 1917**

_(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)_

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

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

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

**Conferences—State**

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

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

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

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

**Interstate**

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

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

Many of the events which made up the stirring record of the Movement in 1916 had not run their full course during the period covered by the last Annual Report. This Report takes up the threads of the great human drama connected with Australia’s part in the war, and
LABOR PAINS VOLUME IV

presents a brief summary of the main incidents connected with the fight against conscription for military service abroad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Stifling Freedom**

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

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

**Usurping Power**

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

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

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

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

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

The 1917 Federal Elections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Repatriation**

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

We submit that in framing the terms of a lasting peace the following principles should be observed:-
1. The right of small nations (including Ireland) to political independence.

2. That the European countries occupied by invading armies during the present war be immediately evacuated.

3. That disputed provinces or territories shall choose their own forms of government, or shall be attached to such adjacent countries as the majority of their inhabitants may by plebiscite decide, on the democratic principle that all just government must rest on the consent of the governed. The free exercise of such choice under conditions of political equality to be secured by the appointment of an international commission of control.

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

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

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

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

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

8. The abolition of conscription in all countries simultaneously.

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

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

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

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

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

It is quite clear that neither Lloyd George nor President Wilson have gone to the bedrock causes in their proposals.

Are these nations prepared to abolish secret diplomacy and secret treaties? Are they prepared to cease expenditure of secret service money for the purpose of espionage and bribery?

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

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

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

**Conscription Resurrected**

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

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

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

**Resignation Pledges**

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1917</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>358,805</td>
<td>474,544</td>
<td>309,223</td>
<td>452,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>353,930</td>
<td>328,216</td>
<td>304,173</td>
<td>308,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>144,200</td>
<td>158,051</td>
<td>119,217</td>
<td>154,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>87,914</td>
<td>119,236</td>
<td>77,891</td>
<td>98,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>94,069</td>
<td>40,884</td>
<td>74,624</td>
<td>38,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>48,493</td>
<td>37,833</td>
<td>35,738</td>
<td>35,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Territories</td>
<td>2,136</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>1,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers’ Votes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91,365</td>
<td>89,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew of Transports</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for the Commonwealth</td>
<td>YES, 1,087,557</td>
<td>NO, 1,160,033</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES, 1,013,361</td>
<td>NO, 1,178,256</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Majority for NO, 1916</td>
<td>72,476</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority for NO, 1917</td>
<td>164,895</td>
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It will be seen by the foregoing that NSW, the oldest and most populous State of the Commonwealth, well maintained in 1917 the lead it gave for Freedom in the previous year, the majority for “No” having increased from 117,739 to 143,598.

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

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

State Politics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Great Strike**

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

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

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

Holman’s Secret Memorandum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sentences of Members of the IWW

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

Labor Propaganda Work

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

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

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

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

**Lectures, IOOF Temple**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of Lecture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 22</td>
<td>“Would Imperial Federation be in the Best Interests of Australian Democracy?”</td>
<td>A Rae</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>“The War and the Way Out”</td>
<td>AC Willis</td>
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<td>Aug. 5</td>
<td>“Unification”</td>
<td>Senator Gardiner</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>“The Cost of Living”</td>
<td>JH Catts and D Guihen</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>“That Australia’s Prime Minister should be Australian born”</td>
<td>A Rae</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>“Should the Australian Labor Party Advocate Straight-out Socialism?”</td>
<td>WH Hutchison</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>“The Defence of Australia”</td>
<td>SA Rosa</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>“The Labor Movement and Its Relationship to Christianity”</td>
<td>RJ Stuart-Robertson</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>“Co-operation”</td>
<td>JP Osborne</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>“The Australian Worker and His Attitude to Religion”</td>
<td>Rev. Portus</td>
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<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>“Persecution: The Parent of Progress”</td>
<td>GM Burns</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>“Should Land be Taxed Without Exemption?”</td>
<td>Senator J Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>“The Wages System: Its Cause and Cure”</td>
<td>Meredith Atkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>“Australian Writers”</td>
<td>Simon Hickey</td>
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We venture to say that the questions asked, and the discussions following, in which members of the audience joined, have been of great educational value to the Professors as well as the audiences.

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

Censorship

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

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

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

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

**Imported Governors**

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

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

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

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

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

**Cypress**

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

**Finance**

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

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

Leaving a Balance of £ 1361 1 2

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

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

**Executive Attendances**

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

**New Branches Endorsed for the Period**

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<tr>
<th>Name of Branch</th>
<th>State Electorate</th>
<th>Federal Electorate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ariah Park</td>
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<td>Alpine</td>
<td>Wollondilly</td>
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<td>Ben Bullen</td>
<td>Mudgee</td>
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<td>Cobar</td>
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<td>Barmedman</td>
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<td>Bourke</td>
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<td>Broadmeadow</td>
<td>Wickham</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
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<td>Bondi Beach</td>
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<td>Braidwood</td>
<td>Monaro</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro</td>
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<td>Beechwood</td>
<td>Hasting-Macleay</td>
<td>Cowper</td>
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<td>Namoi</td>
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<td>Cooma</td>
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<td>Caragabal</td>
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<td>Corowa</td>
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<td>Crookwell</td>
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<td>Coolamon</td>
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<td>Canley Vale</td>
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<td>Denman</td>
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<td>Erskineville</td>
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<td>Frogmore</td>
<td>Yass</td>
<td>Werriwa</td>
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Girilambone  Cobar  Darling
Goolagong  Ashburnham  Werriwa
Geurie  Macquarie  Macquarie
Greenethorpe  Burragong  Werriwa
Gundagai  Cootamundra  Hume
Gundy  Upper Hunter  Robertson
Galong  Yass  Hume
Gladesville  Ryde  Parramatta
Henty  Albury  Hume
Hermidale  Cobar  Darling
Homedale  Hurstville  Illawarra
Islington  Wickham  Newcastle
Lambton  Wallsend  Newcastle
Lowther  Hartley  Macquarie
Lower Bucca  Raleigh  Cowper
Lakemba  Canterbury  Parkes
Liverpool  Camden  Nepean
Loftus Park  Granville  Nepean
Marengo  Burragong  Werriwa
Monteagle  Burragong  Werriwa
Miliblong  Wagga  Hume
Muswellbrook  Upper Hunter  Robertson
Matong  Murrumbidgee  Riverina
Merriwa  Upper Hunter  Robertson
Mundoonan  Liverpool Plains  Darling
Marsden  Lachlan  Riverina
Murrurundi  Upper Hunter  Robertson
Moss Vale  Wollondilly  Werriwa
Numeralla  Monaro  Eden-Monaro
Neilrex  Liverpool Plains  Robertson
Nymagee  Lachlan  Darling
Newcastle  Newcastle  Newcastle
Nevertire  Castlereagh  Darling
Oaklands  Corowa  Riverina
Punchbowl  Canterbury  Parkes
Picton  Wollondilly  Werriwa
Richmond  Hawkesbury  Nepean
Ravensworth  Singleton  Robertson
Rose Bay  Bondi  Wentworth
St Leonards  St Leonards  North Sydney
Stanmore  Enmore  Cook
Sebastopol  Cootamundra  Riverina
Scone  Upper Hunter  Robertson
South Grafton  Raleigh  Cowper
Tighe’s Hill  Wickham  Newcastle
In presenting this, our 14th Annual Report, it is pleasing to state that the enthusiasm and sincerity which has marked our organisation in past years has been maintained in the year just closed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexandria</th>
<th>Randwick</th>
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<td>Darlington</td>
<td>Annandale</td>
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<td>Redfern</td>
<td>Mortdale</td>
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<td>Forest Lodge</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
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<td>King</td>
<td>Belmore No.1.</td>
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<td>Rozelle</td>
<td>Paddington</td>
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<td>Bondi</td>
<td>St Peters</td>
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<td>Darling Harbor</td>
<td>Glebe</td>
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<td>Kensington</td>
<td>Surry Hills</td>
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<td>Lilyfield</td>
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<td>Bexley</td>
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<td>Willoughby</td>
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**Unions**

- Women Workers
- Miscellaneous Workers
- Waitresses

**Federal and State Elections**

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

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

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

**By-Elections**

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

**No-Conscription**

When it became known that the Federal Government had decided to take another referendum on the question of conscripting the manhood of Australia for overseas service, our women threw themselves wholeheartedly into the fight in order to assist to defeat the proposal. A committee was formed, to which all friends and sympathisers were invited. Mr J Bailey, Mr E Riley, MHR, Mr PC Evans, and Mr A Rae attended the initial meeting, and gave addresses on the plan of campaign.

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

**Finance**

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

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

**Political Organising**

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

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

Obituary

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

May Matthews, President
Eva M Seery, Hon. Secretary

Balance Sheet, Year Ending December, 1917

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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In Trust A/c.
£1 18 0

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

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

Day 1, Saturday, 1 June 1918

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

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

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

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

Strenuous Times

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

The Strike

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

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

**Free Speech**

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

**Conscription**

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

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

**Economic Conscription**

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

**Holman's Secret Document**

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

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

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

Present Conference Important

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

Labor and the War

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

Beginning of Business

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

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

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

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

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

**Unions and Political Dues**

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

**Appointment of Committees**

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

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

**Evening Session**

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

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

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

**Recall of Parliamentary Members**

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

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

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

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

**Australian Born Prime Minister**

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

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

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

**Wanted, a Strong Australian Sentiment**

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

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

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

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

**Unions Unable to Affiliate**

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

**Returned Soldiers and Politics**

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

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

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

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

A Returned Soldier’s View

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

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

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

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

Election of Officials

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

Defence and Democracy

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

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

"Suppression" of the War

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

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

**Peace by Conference**

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

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

**Defence Neglected**

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

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

The conclusions set out in the proposals were as follow:

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

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

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

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

Of these, it is understood, one was rejected.

Secretary’s Remarks

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

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

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

Day 8, Monday, 10 June 1918

Deregistered Unions

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Thompson’s Sincerity Questioned

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

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

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

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

Mr Burns: “That is a deliberate lie”.

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

**A Labor Council Matter**

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

Mr Thompson: “Out of 50,000.”

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

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

**Charge and Counter Charge**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Deportation of Italians**

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

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

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

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

**Marketing the Wheat. Labor Party’s Proposals.**

**Pool System to be Permanent.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Land Acts to provide for:-

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

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

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

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

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

**Competent Tribunal to Decide Rent**

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

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

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

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

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

(k) Extensions of the functions of the Commonwealth and State Banks to enable settlers to obtain expeditiously and at lowest possible
rates of interest advances upon improvements, land, stock and crops.

(l) Encouragement of the group system of land settlement.

(m) Closer Settlement Promotion Act to provide that one man in lieu of three may acquire a holding.

(n) All lands to be made available as either additional or original holdings, claims of applicants to be decided by local Land Boards.

One Valuation for All Purposes

(o) Arrangements by the Federal and State Governments by which one valuation will suffice for all Federal, State, Shire and Municipal purposes. That any number of adjoining holdings in one Shire held by one individual be valued conjointly as one holding, the same principle of uniformity to be applied where applicable to assessment for income tax purposes.

(p) That Crown lands on the foreshores of the harbours that may be required for the development of a decentralisation policy be at once reserved from permanent occupancy. That all similar lands that have been alienated and that are or that may be required for shipping and other public purposes be resumed by the State or earmarked for future purchase at present values.

(q) Provision to be made for workmen’s blocks in centres of population.

(r) Provision to be made to prevent speculators from monopolising business and residential allotments in towns and villages.

(s) Election of local members of Land Boards.

(t) Crown Lands Agents to be compelled to fill in forms for applicants for land free of charge.

(u) Members of Parliament to be debarred from acting as paid agents in Crown land matters.

(v) Every Australian citizen upon reaching the age of 18 years to be granted full rights under our land laws.

Moratorium to Continue After the War

(w) The moratorium as at present in existence to apply during the continuance of the war and for three years after.

2. Water conservation and irrigation, with resumption of all frontages to water so conserved, together with such lands as are benefited thereby which are suitable for closer settlement.
3. Existing legislation providing for the distribution of wire netting to be amended to provide for the direct purchase and supply of wire netting and fencing wire to landholders by the Government.
4. The duties of the Pastures Protection Boards to be taken over by the Shire Councils.
5. The sub-letting of Crown lands, and especially of stock reserves to be disallowed.

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

Further Consideration Urged

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

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

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

Considering the Farmer

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

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

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

**Farmers are Behind Labor**

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

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

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

**Proposal to Save Time**

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

**Imprisoned Broken Hill Men**

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

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

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

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

**Organising Committee. Report to Annual Conference. What the Committee is Doing**

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your committee held (including specials) 34 meetings during the past twelve months. The names of the members of the committee are as follows:-
Owing of the death of the late members for the Macquarie, the Murray, and Cobar (Messrs Thrower, Scobie and Fern), and the resignation of Mr Mac Abbott, member for the Upper Hunter, your committee had to arrange to contest four by-elections during this period. Macquarie and Cobar were retained for the Party by the election of Messrs P McGirr for the Macquarie and MA Davidson (unopposed) for Cobar. The Murray went to the National candidate, and Upper Hunter was retained by the Nationalist Party.

**Propaganda Meetings**

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

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

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

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

**Appointment of General Organiser**

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

- To take charge of all organising work throughout the State, with headquarters at Room 38, Macdonell House.
- To attend to the publicity section by giving special attention to preparing articles for the city and country press, counteracting the statements of our opponents, and explaining the objects and principles of the Movement.
- To keep in touch with all Labor supporters in the various centres, recording same, and keeping such records up-to-date.

Financial scheme, Re-organising

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

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

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

Proposed Weekly Organising Newspaper

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

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

Scheme Looks Good

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

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

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

Day 12, Friday, 14 June 1918

IWW Matters

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

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

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

**Barrier Prisoners**

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

**Ireland and Conscription**

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

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

**The Industrialist Section**

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

**Does Not Meet In Secret**

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

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

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

**“Has Outlived Its Usefulness”**

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

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

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

_To Prevent Possible Evils_

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

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

_Referred to Next Conference_

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

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

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

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

_Not Constitutional_

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

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

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

Day 13, Saturday, 15 June

Attendance Growing Less

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

Bonus for Large Families

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

The motion was carried unanimously.

**Soldiers Policy**

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

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

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

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

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

**Dependants’ Pay and Pensions**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Disfranchisement of Electors

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

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

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

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


IWW Prisoners

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

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

What Has Been Done

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

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

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

A Royal Commission Urged

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

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

Mr Morby Sets Conference Thinking

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

**Urges Reduction in Sentence**

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

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

**Mr Morby’s Speech Resented**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No Evidence of Guilt

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

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

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

Economic Conscription

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

The Lestrange Case

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

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

Present Platform Too Unwieldy

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

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

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

State Fighting Platform

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

(a) That the whole of the details of the Fighting Platform be eliminated and the General Platform laid aside.

(b) That the Executive, together with the Parliamentary Party, issue a manifesto setting forth the meaning and intention of the various proposals.

(c) That the Platform as adopted prior to a General Election shall not be altered during the lifetime of the next ensuing Parliament, in the event of a Labor Government being returned to power.

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

Nearing the End

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

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

The Conference was brought to a conclusion at 10.30.


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

No doubt owing to the publicity given to the manner in which the police kept “order” on the Domain on the previous Sunday the police last Sunday did indeed keep perfect order without interfering with any of the Labor speakers. Some 500 police in uniform and plain clothes were...]

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


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present, and protected the speakers against any intended attack from the soldiers opposed to the Labor Party. Police were detailed off in couples to report the utterances of various speakers, while at each meeting the Labor Party had also expert shorthand writers taking full reports for their own protection.

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

“What Have They Done?”

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

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

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

Who the “Patriots” Are

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

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

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

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

Judd Summoned

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

His case comes on for hearing today (June 27). A summons has also been received by Mr Vance Marshall.