CHAPTER 6
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 3 – 17 June 1922

Report in The Australian Worker

A great deal of time in the 1922 Conference was taken up once again with exposing divisions between the AWU and the parliamentary leadership. Premier James Dooley had led the party to defeat at the NSW election on 25 March 1922. This was taken as an opportunity for the AWU to try to ‘purify’ the Caucus. There was prolonged debate (featuring the AWU stooge in Caucus, Greg McGirr) over members of Caucus who had disagreed with McGirr – and thus with the AWU – over tactics involved in a Bill on the basic wage. Early in 1923 the AWU-dominated State Executive would expel Dooley from the party and impose McGirr as the new leader of Caucus. Debate at this Conference should have made clear how little support McGirr had in Caucus. This AWU attack on Caucus control of parliamentary affairs later served as a precedent for the opponents of the AWU to impose JT Lang as a leader immune from Caucus votes. Both sides of the factional war seemed to have lost touch with political reality.

The other major issue in 1922 was debate over the socialisation objective that had been approved by the Brisbane Conference of the Federal ALP. Even though this objective added very little of a ‘socialist’ character to the party, the issue had great symbolic importance separating moderates and radicals. The AWU was generally on the same side as Caucus on this issue, since an insistence on emphasising socialism and the wholesale nationalisation of industry had been one of the issues central to the collapse of the IVC in 1919. Moreover, in 1922, when anti-communism first became a central electoral issue in New South Wales, it was a matter that could cause great harm to the party.

An interesting debate took place in the final days of Conference over a suggestion that the ALP should abandon preselection of candidates for elections to Parliament. What was behind the debate was a general acceptance that the preselection machinery of the party was subject to corrupt manipulation, especially by the ruling AWU faction. Moreover, the preselection process in elections under Proportional Representation tended to give some candidates a priority over others and lead to divisive
public bickering between them. This would feature as a much more central issue in the Conference of the following year. The alternatives were that party members be permitted to contest freely against other party members, or that the Executive should choose the candidates. Delegates were likely to favour the latter course only if their faction controlled the Executive!

The previous Conference had agreed that there should be some change in the rules for selecting delegates to Conference, and had asked the Executive to suggest changes. Instead, the Executive (favouring the interests of the AWU) had changed the rules on its own authority. On the face of it these were minor, affecting conditions for branch rather than union delegates, so that delegates were selected by Electorate Councils rather than directly by branches or leagues. However, since there were only 24 electorates in this period of Proportional Representation, virtually all were subject to stacking over the next few years in order to give advantage to one faction or the other. Electorates could send as many delegates to Conferences as they could elect MPs; thus the number of branch/SEC delegates was restricted to 90. The Women’s Committee had reason to complain that the WCOC had been downgraded. Many local branches declared ‘bogus’ by the Executive – thus denying them access to the Electorate Councils – were reinstated by the Federal Executive before the next Conference. Although there were complaints about Executive control over the rules from the floor in this Conference, the meeting neither confirmed nor repudiated the action of the Executive – thus leaving it in control. The rule change in 1917 (giving one delegate to Conference for each 1000 members in any trade union) had already given enormous advantages to the AWU, and this attempt by the Executive to extend its control over Conference excited great suspicion from opponents of the AWU. It was one of the issues – along with attempts to control Caucus – that led to intervention by the Federal Executive before the next Conference. The issue of rules for selecting delegates would feature in most Conferences in the next few years – until it was settled for the Lang era by the ‘Red Rules’ of 1926 that were designed to sideline the AWU.

Discussion on the socialisation objective and the McGirr controversy took up so much time that almost none of the motions on the detailed business paper could be addressed before Conference petered out for lack of a quorum.
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1921

*(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 31st Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is herewith submitted for your consideration.

**New Branches**

During the year new Branches have been formed and old Branches have been resuscitated at the following centres:

South Lidcombe, Undercliffe, Gundagai, Northbridge, Lake Cargellico, Hume Reservoir, Oberon, Coraki, Braidwood, Yenda, Surry Hills (women), Coramba, Canowindra, Martin’s Creek, Hillston, Kensington, Linburn, Woy Woy, Gloucester, Waterfall Sanatorium, Wee Waa, Carrington, Lambton, Nambucca Heads, Gunnedah, Oaklands, St Peters, Urana, Boolaroo, Gerringing, Newlands, Thirroul, Rose Bay, McDonald-town, Nelligan, Langlea, Guildford, Nyngan, Leeton, Jingellic, Croydon, Geurie, Lidcombe, Girrriween, Sutherland, Clovelly, Hunter’s Hill, Werris Creek, Lavington, Harden, Manilla, Westmead, Marulan, Summer Hill, Dora Creek, Lambton, Lyndhurst, Cronulla, Murrurundi, Leichhardt West, Ulmarra, Sylvania, Manildra, North Auburn, Darlington, Walgett, Morriguy, North Ryde, Blayney.

The following Unions have also affiliated under Rule 18 and Rule 6: Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association (Coast District), Dental Mechanics’ Union.

**Executive Meetings**

During the year the Executive have held 42 meetings. The personnel of the Executive altered in consequence of members nominating for selection for member of Parliament and having to resign in accordance with the rules, alternate members taking their place.

**Deaths of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party**

During the year Labor in the Commonwealth has suffered very severe losses by the sad deaths of Mr F Tudor, MHR, Leader, and Mr TJ Ryan, MHR, Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, and Mr Page, MHR, Maranoa, and the Hon J Storey, Premier of New South Wales, and Mr W Kearsley, MLA.

The sad news was received with profound regret throughout the Commonwealth and the Labor Movement, to the advancement of which they had dedicated their lives. Their never-failing energy, their broad
outlook and the dominant personality of our late leaders constitute an irreparable loss to the Labor Movement.

**West Sydney Vacancy**

The vacancy caused by the death of Mr TJ Ryan was filled by the election of Mr WH Lambert, late Lord Mayor of Sydney and President of the ALP, whose selection by the workers of West Sydney was a fitting reward for long years of unselfish devotion to their cause.

The election of Mr WH Lambert as representative for West Sydney in the Federal Parliament necessitated his resignation, in accordance with the rules, from the Presidency of the ALP. The Senior Vice-President (Mr JM Power) was elected to fill the position for the balance of the year.

**Balmain and Newcastle Vacancy**

The vacancies caused by the deaths of the Hon. the Premier (the late Mr John Storey) and Mr W Kearsley, MLA, were filled by the appointment of Mr T Keegan and Mr D Murray, the next highest Labor candidates at the elections in 1920, in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act.

**Appointments to the Legislative Council**

The Labor Government made sixteen new appointments to the Upper House, four members of the Executive (namely, Messrs Power, Coates, Smith and Higgins) being among the number. The question was raised that members of the Executive, having been appointed to the Upper House, came within the purview of Rule 27 – “The seat on the Executive of any member thereof nominating for selection for Parliament, Federal or State, shall at once automatically become vacant”. In answer to this question it was pointed out that Conference had accepted the ruling laid down that Rule 27 did not apply to members of the Legislative Council or Aldermen of the Municipal Councils, therefore the members of the Executive so appointed have retained their seats on the Executive, and Conference is the proper body to determine whether they shall continue or otherwise.

**Disintegrating Influences**

The Executive elected by the 1921 Annual Conference were called on to prevent and stamp out certain efforts that were being engineered to disintegrate the Party, and the formation of the Propagandists and Organisers’ Union by Mr JH Catts, MHR, was the culminating point which compelled the Executive, in the interests of the Movement, to declare that all persons associated with this so-called Union were, some of them innocently enough, actually acting the part of scabs on the Labor Movement, and called on them to disband forthwith. The action of the Executive resulted in the P & O Union disbanding, but the disintegrating
tactics of its founder were continued, and his influence was responsible for much confusion in the elections recently held.

Political Crisis

The Government, holding office as they were by the slender majority of one on the floor of the House, were precipitated into crisis by the action of Mr Levy, Speaker, in resigning from the Chair.

The Labor Government resigned office, and Sir George Fuller was sent for and formed a Government, which was sworn in and lasted seven hours.

Mr Dooley was again sent for and commissioned to form a Government, Mr Levy being elected Speaker. The state of parties was the same as before. Apparently the conditions under which Mr Dooley was commissioned to form a Government were that an early appeal to the people should be made.

Every effort was made by the Executive to safeguard the interests of the rank and file of the Movement and to secure the right to hold selection ballots.

Special meetings of the Executive were held, at which Mr J Dooley, the Leader of the Party, attended, and stated that he would be unable to secure any further prorogation of Parliament, that the latest date on which Parliament would be dissolved would be the middle of January, that the writs would be issued about February 8, and polling take place about one month following.

In view of the position set out by the Leader the following resolution was adopted by the Executive:

“That the Secretary be directed to inform Electorate Councils and Branches, or where no Council exists the Leagues in the area, that, providing they intimate to this Executive on or before Wednesday, 18th instant that they will arrange to complete the selection of candidates by Saturday, January 28th, 1922, local selections may be conducted, and to permit of this being done all time limits set out in Rule 44 and the required advertisements in Labor News or The Worker be dispensed with.

“Where Electorate Councils and Electorate Branches do not comply with the foregoing, all selections in such electorates be made by the Executive, but that it be made known that eligible members nominated by such Councils or Branches will receive Executive consideration.”

Without a doubt the Labor Movement was caught on the hop. Electorate Councils in many electorates had allowed themselves to become moribund, and in some cases had gone out of existence, and the Executive had to proceed in accordance with the resolution adopted to select the candidates for the following electorates: Byron, Oxley, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Wollondilly, Sturt, Goulburn, and Northern Tablelands.

Acting on the recommendation of the Organising Committee, who had carefully considered the best methods for polling the highest Labor
vote, the Executive adopted the system of only running as many effective candidates as there was a chance of winning with, and decided to regiment the vote and to divide the electorates into at many districts as there were effective candidates, each candidate to get No.1 vote in the district allotted.

The selfishness of the individual candidates defeated this object, and several candidates, who had previously agreed to accept the conditions, rebelled, and organised for themselves instead of the Movement. In consequence of Mr WJ Ratcliffe refusing to abide by the decision he had previously agreed to, the Executive were compelled to withdraw his endorsement as a Labor candidate. By persisting in his defiance of the regulations laid down he automatically placed himself in the category of a scab and outside the Labor Movement.

The result of the introduction into the campaign of the sectarian issue in a form more virulent and bitter than on any previous occasion, the publication of a Protestant manifesto alleged to be issued by Working Men’s Councils, but which, on the face of it, showed the handiwork of some person whose acquaintance with the inner working of the administration of the ALP was apparent, was a primary cause of our defeat.

The date of polling day was set down for March 25, and the result was a severe setback to the Movement. The Government went to the country with a following of 45 members and came back with the loss of the following members: JW Doyle (Balmain), T Cleary (Wollondilly), J Clarke (Wammerawa), M Burke (Sydney), CW Johnston (Bathurst), W Ely (Parramatta) and in a House of 90 members we have a following of 35 pledged Labor men.

**Expulsion of Mr JH Catts, MHR**

On Sunday, 2nd April, 1922, Mr JH Catts, who, in conjunction with a committee appointed by the Executive and the State Parliamentary Labor Party, acted as Campaign Director, published in the columns of the *Sunday Times* a malicious and false indictment of the Executive, and made charges of a serious character reflecting on the integrity of the President, General Secretary, and other members of the ALP.

The Executive was called together to review the article in question, and discussed it for several hours. Mr Catts asked for an adjournment of the discussion in order to enable him to prepare his defence. This was granted, and the Executive met again on Friday, 7th April, when Mr Catts, after nearly two hours’ address, failed to justify his statement. Every consideration and every opportunity was given Mr Catts to justify his actions, but after two hours in which neither Mr Catts nor his friends made any attempt at justification, the Executive, by 18 votes to 13, carried a resolution expelling Mr Catts from the Labor Movement. If any justification for this step were needed the celerity with which Mr Catts announced the formation of a renegade party is the answer.
Municipal
During the year the Sydney Municipal Elections were held, and resulted in the Conservative and reactionary elements in the City again securing control of the City Council, the workers of which are in for a very bad time. The concessions obtained for them through the efforts of the Labor aldermen are in a very fair way of disappearing, and the abolition of the 44-hour week, together with a reduction in wages, is contemplated.

Finances
We commenced the year 1921 with a balance in bank of £21/3/3 and with liabilities amounting to over £1000. During the year we ran several carnivals, and raised over £2000 by this means, which enabled us to clear off all the old outstanding accounts.

Art Union
The Art Union was again conducted by ex-Senator Macdougall, but, unfortunately, it has not turned out the success anticipated, and instead of assisting to swell the Library Fund it shows a loss on this year’s efforts of about £70. Metropolitan Branches have not pushed it with the same vim as last year, and the receipts from this source are several hundreds of pounds less than in 1921.

Labor News
During the year Labor News has been reorganised. Mr JF Higgins, MLC, resigned from the management. Mr WA Gibbs, Assistant Secretary, was appointed to act as Manager, with Mr W Ennis as Editor. It is anticipated that under the new management Labor News will increase its popularity and continue to spread the gospel of Labor’s broad humanitarian principles into centres where same have not previously reached.

In Conclusion
The General Secretary desires to thank the President and Executive members for their unfailing courtesy and unfailing attention given to the many problems that have been placed before them from time to time. The sincere regard of members for the best interests of the Movement has resulted in a harmony of discussion which has greatly facilitated the consideration of the numberless matters submitted during the year for the Executive’s decision.

W Carey, General Secretary.
Federal Parliamentary Labor Party’s Report

During the past year the Federal Party have had irreparable losses. First, the Hon. James Page, late member for Maranoa; then the Hon. TJ Ryan, Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives; and still again last January, when our trusted Leader (the Hon. Frank Tudor) passed away. All three men have played a big part in our Movement, and when taken from us were carrying Labor’s banner with honor to the Movement. All three men had great capacity and application, and their wise advice and help are greatly missed in our counsels. The tragedy of this great loss to the Labor Movement is that all three comrades were in the prime of their lives, and had they been spared would have rendered great service to the Movement for many years to come.

The Federal Labor Party have been fully alive to questions of international importance, and every movement has been watched, especially that which was likely to affect Australia. When the Prime Minister (WM Hughes) arrived back from the imperial Conference it was clearly seen that, so far as the Commonwealth Government was concerned, that we would take no part in the Washington Conference. The Conference was referred to slightly, if not sneeringly, by the Prime Minister. As Australia is seriously involved by the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, the Pacific problems, and disarmament generally, the Federal Labor Party immediately brought pressure to bear in the House upon the Government. This resulted in a delegate being sent. While the delegate (then Minister for Defence, GF Pearce) is far from representing the views of the Federal Labor Party, the decision to send him could not be altered. Even though Australia was represented by one who has completely lost the confidence of the Australian Labor Movement, it is better to have that representation than none at all.

Alteration of Constitution

The Constitution Alteration Convention Bill, promised by the Nationalists at the last elections, made its tardy appearance during the last session, and not even its sponsor could do other than apologise for it. The Bill is a grotesque travesty, and one cannot but help feel that, owing to the campaign started against the Convention by the Federal Labor Party, the Bill was purposely drafted to ensure that it would not go farther than the second reading stage. The measure was stillborn, and the corpse is another addition to the many promises made by the Nationalist Government which have not been carried out. The Federal Labor Party regard the proposal to elect a Convention as a gross waste of time and money. There is no better body to make alterations of the Constitution than those who are working under the Constitution in the Commonwealth Parliaments. Even though a Convention were elected and sat, at a cost of anything up to £250,000, their decision would then be reviewed by the Parliament, and then sent to the people by referendum. To save time and
money the Federal Party consider that it would be more satisfactory for the Commonwealth Parliaments to make the alterations.

The greater portion of the session was taken up in dealing with the Tariff, and, notwithstanding that we failed to incorporate the provisions of our Platform, viz., New Protection, the Party, with rare exceptions, voted for the higher duties. The Tariff, even in its present unfinished form, will go towards establishing new industries in Australia, and will strengthen those already established. The Party endeavored unsuccessfully to make provision for the protection of not only the manufacturer but also the worker and consumer, but failed on Party votes.

**Geneva Conference**

When it was learned that a clerk from Australia House had been appointed by the Government to represent the Commonwealth on the Geneva Conference the Party immediately objected, and, mainly owing to the feeling created, the Government then reluctantly appointed Mr Bruce to also go to the Conference.

**Defence Act Amendment**

One of the most serious attempts to shackle Australia with the European brand of militarism was made by the National Government during the year. The British Army Act, with all its obsolete and middle-age cruelty, was tacked on to the Australian Act, but owing again to the very fine work done by Senator Gardiner, and continued by the Party, this measure was discreetly dropped. If it ever appears, the British Army Act provisions are hardly likely to again be incorporated.

**Defence Estimates Reduction**

The Federal Party consider that now the war is over that much of the money that is being spent is wasted. Accordingly an attempt was made to curb the squandering of millions of pounds. The Party considers that while the people of the world are groaning under the burden of taxation owing to the war that this load should not be further increased. We were successful in making large reductions in the Estimates, and by so doing prevented the 70 days’ camp so fondly desired by the Government and Military Junta.

Other matters, such as Arbitration (when we were successful in getting more Judges appointed), Shipping, Federal Capital, Repatriation, War Service Homes, Old Age, Invalid and Soldiers’ Pensions, Workmen’s Compensation, also received the attention of the Party, and every possible advantage was taken to propagate the principles of the Labor Party when dealing with those matters.

Yours fraternally,

Arthur Blakeley, Secretary Federal Parliamentary
**Municipal Labor Party’s Annual Report**

For its daring and malicious misrepresentation the Sydney press has earned a reputation equal to the most selfish and conservative newspapers throughout the Empire. Labor’s administration during 1921 has received unfair and bitter criticism.

Lord Mayor Lambert was specially singled out for those brutal and unwarranted attacks, but notwithstanding the abuse and discredit hurled at him he calmly and fearlessly carried through Labor’s ideals and policy to the entire satisfaction of his Party.

Labor reforms have been considered and where possible successfully dealt with.

The absorption by the City of the Municipality of Paddington was considered to be the initial step towards Greater Sydney. Unfortunately, however, a small minority of Labor’s representatives in the Paddington Council were successful in preventing the amalgamation. Had the combined efforts of each party been unanimous there is no doubt a number of municipalities contiguous to the City would have invited similar consideration. The time is now opportune for Legislative enactment on Greater Sydney.

Increases in the basic wage have been made to all female employees in the service.

Preference to Unionists when hiring the Town Hall by any firm, institution, or company requiring the Town Hall for any function where the services of ushers, attendants, etc., were essential in addition to the attendants in the employ of the Council.

**Admission of Press to Committee Meetings**

The daily press, in its malicious method of wilful misrepresentation, distorted the reports of Committees to such an unwarranted extent that the Party decided to exclude the press from all Committee meetings. Although this appears to be a drastic step, it is nevertheless the practice adopted by every municipality of importance throughout the world.

**Sydney Corporation Amending Act**

The Sydney Corporation Act is antiquated and obsolete. Its powers are extremely narrow and limited – more so than most of the second-rate municipalities. The necessity for amending same and giving the city something reasonable has been brought under the notice of different Governments. Early in 1920 a deputation representative of the City Council waited upon the Government requesting certain amendments. Again on two occasions in 1921 similar requests were made. Finally Government sanction was granted and a bill was hurriedly drafted and rushed through Parliament on the eve of the municipal elections, but it met its fate at the hands of the Upper House. While regretting the defeat
of this Amending Act, I trust the Movement will keep the Government awake to the democratic principles involved and urge it to recommit the measure at the earliest opportunity.

**Acquisition of Metal Quarry**

The time and attention of the Party has been occupied during the past two years to the consideration of the purchase of a suitable metal property. Negotiations are still proceeding. Blue metal is used extensively but supplies are spasmodic, and often curtailed, causing inconvenience and delay in carrying on works. Therefore Labor in the City Council, like suburban councils, is anxious to control its own supplies.

**Timber, Wood Poles and Wood Blocks**

The use of these is prohibitive on account of the price, the latter having increased during recent years from £5/10/- per 1000 to £25 per 1000. Wood poles are in great demand for electric light extensions. Several thousands are used annually. The price per pole ranges from £4/10/- to £10 each.

The price of electricity was the only commodity not increased during the war period. Despite the increased cost of coal and machinery, electric current was generated and sold by the Council at a profit until the year ending 1920. This undertaking in 1921, owing to extra heavy charges, began to show a loss of £4000 per month. This loss caused the Council to approach the Government requesting permission to increase the price of electricity to consumers outside the City area. (Although the Council could increase the price in the City without an appeal to the Court, it was only just and equitable that all consumers should equally share the increases.) After a delay of some months the Government passed the necessary legislation for a Commission of Inquiry into the increased cost of generating electricity, giving full power to the Commissioner to recommend and adjust such increases (if any). Mr Justice Wade held an exhaustive inquiry and finally recommended an increase of five-tenths of a penny on light and three-tenths of a penny on power per unit. An increase sufficient to meet the department’s obligations was imposed.

Notwithstanding the necessity for those increases the department will in the year 1923 be in a position to considerably reduce the price of electricity. The reason for such reductions will be due to the modern machinery installed, and about to be installed, under Labor’s administration. Although Labor has been defeated in the elections it should not be forgotten that the City Council’s electricity undertaking has been placed on a sound commercial basis. This will be most apparent when the winter load of 1923 is tested.
Coal is an important item in the generation of electricity. It is estimated that 120,000 tons of coal will be consumed during 1922. Contracts have been accepted for Western coal at 26/- per ton and Northern Extended coal at 27/5 per ton. These prices make one realise the necessity for the Council owning its own mine and generating electricity on the coalfield. Negotiations are proceeding for the purchase of a coal mine with quantity and quality of coal, also suitable area for new power house.

The electrical undertaking has received the Party’s close attention. Early in 1921 an official inspection of the Power House was made. That visit revealed the shocking conditions under which the men had to work. Those conditions have since received attention. The machinery was inspected and found to be obsolete and efficient, with no prospects of supplying the future demands for current. The Party decided to encourage the Chief Electric Engineer to push along with recommendations for modern machinery to cope with all demands. Immediate action was necessary, as later events proved, when during the winter months of 1920 and 1921 restrictions on the supply of current had to be imposed, seriously inconveniencing many people in business and private life.

The following schedule will give some idea of Labor’s active administration in that Department during 1919-1920 and 1921, together with the commitments entered into until the year ending 1923:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mains</th>
<th>Substation Machinery</th>
<th>Buildings</th>
<th>Power House Plant</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>108,313</td>
<td>63,362</td>
<td>86,196</td>
<td>298,939</td>
<td>23,907</td>
<td>580,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>189,908</td>
<td>90,664</td>
<td>15,732</td>
<td>36,356</td>
<td>66,268</td>
<td>398,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>262,487</td>
<td>57,171</td>
<td>43,978</td>
<td>373,718</td>
<td>28,823</td>
<td>766,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total for the three years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,745,822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimated Capital Expenditure, 1922 and 1923

[A complicated table of estimates can be found in the original, but is not reproduced here]

The City Council elections were held on December 2 last, when the Municipal Labor Party was defeated. It needs little investigation to trace the reason for such defeat. The apathy of the workers enrolled assisted materially, while the police collecting the roll were conspicuous for neglect and carelessness. Superior organisation by the Civic Reform Party, together with unlimited funds and voluntary workers and motor-cars, brought about this result. We had the City Commercial Princes, down to the City Vegetable Markets Forestaller or Agent, working from 8
o’clock in the morning until the poll closed, to defeat Labor, and they succeeded beyond their expectation.

The municipal franchise requires immediate alteration. Adult franchise is the only democratic means of giving the people proper representation in the City Council. It remains for the Labor Government to provide this reform.

I trust your Executive will note this Plank of Labor’s Platform, and urge the Government to make special and immediate provision for adult enfranchisement.

Yours fraternally,
W Holdsworth, Hon. Secretary, Municipal Labor Party

Annual Report of Women’s Central Organising Committee

For the year ending 31st December, 1921 the WCOC of the ALP have held their usual fortnightly meetings.

With regard to actual work done the WCOC can well lay claim to the fact that they have not relaxed in their efforts, notwithstanding that a Labor Government is in power, to see that they have done their very best in helping the Government, and especially its Ministers, by bringing before them, by means of deputations and correspondence, many vital necessities affecting the welfare of the State in general.

Great disappointment was exhibited by the WCOC over the Labor Government not being able to place upon the Statute-book the great Motherhood Endowment Bill, which is of paramount importance to the women and children of this State. We realise that the failure to pass this bill is not the fault of the Minister in charge nor the Labor Party, but we attribute it to the fact that the Government had to rely on the support of a slender majority of members, and to the fact that the Speaker stepped down from the Chair when this bill was about to become a reality.

The WCOC of the ALP have during the past twelve months taken an active part in bringing before Unions and Government Departments various irregularities committed by employers of labor, more particularly breaches of awards. In one instance we had it brought under the notice of the Department of a certain knitting factory where girls were fined sixpence for the frivolous offence of speaking to each other while at work.

During the year there have been two Federal by-elections, and the fight to see who was to retain control of the Sydney Municipal Council. The Labor Party was successful in retaining West Sydney, but was defeated at the municipal polls. The WCOC had its members working in these elections, but owing to the lack of funds we were unable to do the work that the National Party did, who, in their endeavors to win, spent thousands and thousands of pounds. It is absolutely essential that the Labor Party should pay special attention to the financial aspect if they
can hope to again win at the municipal polls. Many efforts were made during the year to raise funds for political purposes, but we are sorry to say very little money resulted. We are preparing for a huge Easter carnival with a most attractive programme, and we hope by this means to raise enough finance to at least pay a goodly share for the expense that will be necessary in the coming State elections.

In reference to propaganda and organising work done by my Committee, I wish to say that we have always done our very best to see that Leagues and Unions are kept in constant touch with the WCOC, and matters of importance, such as requesting Leagues to hold social evenings to raise finance, and asking their members to do their best in regard to placing people on the roll, holding meetings, etc. Interest is displayed by Leagues and Unions by sending along delegates, and as the OC now consists of a membership of between three and four hundred it goes to show the WCOC is wide awake.

Many of our women have been created JPs, and we are hoping on the next return of our Party to see many of our good, solid Labor women adorn the benches of the Legislative Council, also the Assembly.

We deeply regret the demise of our beloved and respected Leader, Mr John Storey. His last letter to the WCOC of the ALP expressed his intention to arrange for the appointment to the Council of good Labor women. However, we must trust that the present Leader will carry out our late respected Leader’s intentions with regard to the recognition of our Labor women’s services to the Labor Movement.

The year has been a disastrous one for our many Labor representatives. Labor has suffered at the hands of death. It has lost many stalwart Laborites, including among them Mr John Storey, Mr TJ Ryan, Mr Con Wallace, Mr W Kearsley, Mr J Fingleton, and Mr P Brookfield. We regret also to mention the untimely end of Mrs Kermonde and Miss Stone. Even as I write I regret to hear of the untimely end of Mr Frank Tudor, our respected Leader in the Federal House.

The annual election of officers for the coming year resulted: President, Mrs G Melville; Vice-Presidents, Miss A Sorenson, Mesdames Fox, Gorman, Scott; Treasurer, Miss S Mitchell; Secretary, Mrs GC Bodkin; Assistant Secretary, Mrs Maincke; Executive Committee, Mesdames Humphreys, Frome, Russell, Ratcliff, Misses Scott, Mitchell, Moore, Malley.

Yours in unity,
(Mrs) Ellen Bodkin, Hon. Secretary.

[Balance Sheet of NSW ALP not reproduced here. It can be found in the ML collection.]
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1922

(The Worker, 7, 14, 21 June 1922)

Day 1, Saturday, 3 June 1922

Spirited Discussion on Executive’s Report

President’s Address
The Annual Conference of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party was commenced last Saturday afternoon at the Trades Hall, Sydney. A pleasing feature of the opening session was the record attendance of delegates, there being 220 present. This was an indication that, whatever may have been said in the capitalist press, Labor has lost none of its old-time enthusiasm.

In declaring the Conference open for business, the President (Mr JM Power) referred to the losses sustained by Labor since the last Conference, both in Federal and State spheres. Delegates honoured the memories of deceased comrades by standing for a few moments. Sympathy was also expressed for the Labor Leader (Mr Dooley), who recently sustained a painful injury. Mr Power said he was hopeful that Mr Dooley would be able to attend Conference before it concluded its sittings.

The standing orders having been adopted, Mr C Last was appointed minute secretary and Mr CE Roberts as timekeeper. Messrs G Buckland, J Bailey, MLA, JM Baddeley, MLA, J Tyrrell, and Mrs Dwyer were appointed to the Agenda Committee, and the Credentials Committee as appointed by the Executive was endorsed.

On the question of admitting the press, it was decided that only the Labor Press should be admitted, and that reports should be handed to the daily press at the conclusion of each session. It was further decided that only supporters of the Movement vouched for by delegate should be admitted to the public gallery.

The Knighting of Barwell
Mr G Gibbons (Murrumbidgee Electorate Council) secured the suspension of the standing orders, and moved: “That this Conference,
representing the democratic thought of the State, enters an emphatic protest against the knighting of Premier Barwell, the leading black labor advocate of Australia, as such action must tend to create general social disruption.” Mr Gibbons said that Barwell had led the agitation to introduce black labor into Australia. They were entitled to ask what was the influence that induced the British authorities to hand out a title to this man. Barwell was devoting his efforts to break down wages and the working conditions of the workers in Australia and introduce a coolie standard, and for this he was given a title. There was no doubt that the big interests in the Commonwealth were behind Barwell in his black labor campaign. It would be interesting to note who recommended him for a title. There was a feeling that the recommendation was made by highly-placed politicians in the Federal Parliament. The knighting of Barwell was an insult to Australian sentiment. British folk knew that the Australian people were solidly behind the White Australia policy, yet here was a title handed out to a man trying to break down that policy. There was little doubt that Barwell was acting in collusion with the Imperialists to further the black labor doctrine.

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA (Newcastle), said that the Labor Party should lay it down definitely that it was opposed to all such distinctions. He suggested that this should become an addendum to the motion. This was agreed to. Mr E Riley, MHR, asked that the names of other persons who received titles should be included in the motion. Mr Gibbons said he was against all titles, but he thought Barwell’s case called for special mention. Mr J Lynch (Railway Industry Branch of the AWU) thought there was plenty of other business to do without bothering about Barwell. They could not interfere in the matter, so why waste time. Several delegates referred to the titles recommended by the Storey Labor Government. Finally the motion, with the addendum added, was carried.

**Representation at Conference**

Miss Johnston (Marrickville) moved, Mrs Stone (Botany) seconded: “That the members of the Marrickville ALP enter their emphatic protest against the Executive in their endeavour to curtail the women’s representation at the coming Conference and that we stand for equal rights with men.”

The President thought that perhaps a statement by himself on the matter would clear the air. A motion had been adopted by last Conference instructing the Executive to provide for representation under the new electoral system, and the Executive had only carried out the wishes of the Conference. If delegates were opposed to the new system of representation then they should not have instructed the Executive to provide for it. However, he did not think it had affected the representation at Conference. There were just as many delegates present at this Conference as at the last. He thought, too, that there had been no
curtailment in the representation of women delegates. Opponents of the Labor Movement (notably Mr Catts) had said that the Executive had desired to hamstring the Conference, but if they looked at rule 20 they would see that nothing of the kind had been done. In fact, under the new system the country Leagues had a better representation than they had under the old system. There was never any suggestion in the minds of Executive officers to restrict the number of women delegates.

Executive’s Action Questioned

Mr Roberts (Storemen and Packers) thought the idea at last Conference was that the Executive would make certain recommendations which would be adopted at this Conference; not that the Executive should carry out the work itself. He raised the question of the absence of delegates from the Sydney and Balmain electorates.

The President said that Sydney was not represented because the fees had not been paid, and Balmain’s position was being discussed by the Credentials Committee.

Mrs Fowler (Botany) was opposed to the motion. Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that the Balmain delegates claimed that the Executive had exceeded its powers and because of that had decided to elect delegates on the old basis. His idea was that the resolution carried at last Conference meant that the matter would be dealt with by the present Conference. He did not think the Executive had any power to take the matter into its own hands and he protested against the Executive filching from Conference the right to amend the constitution. It was because of this that Balmain refused to accept the ruling of the Executive and why the delegates were not present.

At this stage, it was decided to incorporate another motion from the Marrickville Branch, as the discussion was a general one. This motion read: “This League protests against the Executive in the attempt to curtail the representation to Conference.”

Mr V Molesworth, MLA, said that the representation at Conference showed that the alteration in the method of representation did not matter much. Mr TJ Smith (Sydney) hoped that the Executive would give back to women the same representation as they had previously. Mr E O’Dea (Shop Assistants) opposed the motion. He claimed that it was unfair to give small Leagues the same representation as Unions ten times as large. After further discussion the two motions were defeated.

The President’s Address

At the evening session, the President (Mr Power) delivered his address to delegates. He expressed pleasure at seeing an almost 100 per cent attendance. That was sufficient answer to Labor’s enemies that enthusiasm in
the Movement was dying. He thought that the present Conference would compare favourably with any of its predecessors. It was his first appearance before delegates as President of the Movement, and he was keenly conscious of the great honour thrust upon him. He made a graceful reference to Mr Lambert’s long occupancy of the Presidential chair.

He wanted to tell delegates that they met as equals. There were no “superior persons” in the Labor Movement. Delegates should not be afraid to speak their minds at Conference – it was the place where all differences should be thrashed out. Let them be frank with one another on the floor of Conference, and not resort to whispering outside to the enemies of Labor. The Movement was above the feelings and considerations of individuals, and whatever they did let it be for the good of the Movement as a whole.

**Upper House Appointments**

At the last Conference there was a feeling that the Executive should be supported in insisting that the Government take steps to advance Labor’s programme. The first essential was the removal of the Upper House. Conference stated very clearly that under no pretext would it allow the Party to hold office unless that matter was tackled. A certain procedure was laid down. It was followed, with the result that 16 accredited supporters of Labor were elected to the Upper House.

The President referred to a point that had been raised that members of the Executive on being elected to the Upper House should have resigned from the Executive. The last Conference laid it down very distinctly that members elected to the Upper House were not in the same position as members elected to the Assembly and that it was not necessary for them to resign. Nobody took exception to that rule at the time. As far as he was personally concerned, he was prepared to resign from the Upper House and the Presidential chair at a moment’s notice if Conference wished it.

**Disruptive Elements Routed**

Mr Power went on to refer to the quarrels that were a marked feature of the last Conference. Happily they had now subsided. They were today a perfectly harmonious gathering. The disruptive elements had been got rid of. (Applause) Touching the formation of the P and O Organisation, he said it was an unfortunate incident in the life of the Labor Movement, but it was closed now, and closed for ever. The Executive acted, and acted swiftly, in the matter. He thought the right thing had been done, and members of the Labor Movement had loyally accepted the decision of the Executive. He was sure that most of the members who had joined
The Brisbane Conference

In October, continued Mr Power, one of the most momentous events in the history of the Labor Movement took place – the Brisbane Conference. He referred at length to the circumstances which led up to the calling of that Conference. At the time the All-Australia Trade Union Conference was held, he claimed it was establishing a dangerous precedent. For an outside body to adopt a political policy which was in turn adopted by the ALP provided those people who were decrying the efficiency of the ALP with the very material they needed. Here, they could say, was proof that the ALP was not able to function of itself. He maintained that if the Trades Unions wished to reconstruct the Labor Movement they could have done it within the ranks of the Movement, without calling an outside conference. It was creating a dangerous precedent. It was playing with fire, and could do no good.

The decisions arrived at by the All-Australia TU Congress were sent along to the Brisbane Conference, where they were adopted. The principal one was the new objective. The old objective had stood for 20 years without alteration, and he claimed that everything the workers wanted was contained in the old objective.

“An Abstract Proposition”

At Brisbane the NSW delegates did their best to reject the new objective, feeling that to carry it was not to help the workers so much as to provide a whip for their political enemies with which they could flog the Movement. The Brisbane Conference had failed to give a clear interpretation as to what the new objective really meant, and nobody had yet enlightened him as to what it really did mean. A big majority of the delegates at that Conference were gagged and bound to vote in a certain direction. He considered the Brisbane objective an abstract proposition, and while he did not suggest that they should repudiate what the Interstate Executive had done, there would be a proposal before Conference which he hoped delegates would seriously consider.

Need for Labor Daily Press

Referring to Labor’s defeat at the Sydney municipal elections, the President said it was due mainly to over-confidence. They relied on Labor’s good work to carry them through. But their enemies organised carefully, and had unlimited funds at their disposal, as well as a powerful press. It was all very well for delegates to say that the workers read the “S.M.
Herald” and voted in the opposite direction. The fact remained that where a powerful press was hammering something into their minds day after day it was bound to have some effect. Labor would never be safe until it had its own press. (Cheers) He appealed to all delegates to use their efforts to get the money subscribed for Labor’s Daily Press as soon as possible. Anything they did in that direction would return benefits a thousandfold. They were not downhearted. Labor would come again in civic government. It might even be a good thing to get these temporary setbacks, as it would enable them to see their weaknesses and profit by them.

**A Relic of Barbarism**

Coming to the State elections, it could be said that they were defeated primarily by that relic of barbarism – sectarianism. The press worked it for all it was worth. Sectarianism was an unscrupulous electioneering dodge worked by the press and politicians. Supporters of Labor had to get that narrow prejudice about religions out of their minds. The Labor Movement knew no religion, and did not concern itself with any one religion. However, they had learned where the political enemy had hit them hardest, and would know how to fight it in future.

Another reason for Labor’s defeat was the want of organisation. The ALP was not organised as it should have been, and this was a matter that Conference should consider. There must be some guiding hand in the Movement, otherwise it would develop into a rabble. Labor supporters must realise that the first fundamental principle was solidarity. Those who were not prepared to obey the Executive’s ruling should get out of the Movement. He deplored the want of solidarity at the last elections, and hoped for better things in the future. It was not so much a question of forming new branches as to key up the existing branches.

**Voting at Last Election**

In answer to a delegate, the President denied that the Parliamentary Labor Party was responsible for the regimenting of the vote at the last State elections. The ALP Executive elected by Conference was responsible for it, and if it had acted wrong then they had themselves to blame. They had decided to do away with the cut-throat tactics that were a sad feature of the previous elections, and had the Executive’s proposals been carried out there would have been a different tale to tell. President Power made a lengthy explanation regarding the method of selecting candidates at the last election.

The Movement was now given an opportunity to take stock. They must build up a concrete Movement. It was all very well for Laborites to speak about solidarity. Let them act up to it. Today they had men
sneering at them and saying, “Where is the Labor party now?” They had to remember that if those men had stood to Labor during the war, when it needed support, Labor would not have been where it is today. In those dark hours Labor was betrayed by the very men who for years had mouthed solidarity every hour of the day.

President Power concluded a two-hour speech by appealing to delegates to rouse the Movement in preparation for the Federal campaign. They could capture the National Parliament if they set their shoulders to the wheel. They might never be able to attain Labor’s objective in the present generation, but at least they could make the way easier for those who came after them.

**Federal Leader Welcomed**

Mr Mat Charlton, Federal Labor Leader, was introduced to the delegates and received an enthusiastic welcome. In an address he thanked them for their hearty welcome, and said he recognised the responsibilities cast upon him as leader of the Federal Party. He referred feelingly to the passing away of his colleagues – Messrs Tudor, Ryan and Page. He did not think the Federal elections would take place before six or eight months. Labor could win if they got together. With proper organisation and solidarity the end of the Hughes Government was certain. There was no reason whatever why Labor should not win at the coming Federal elections.

Referring to the recent defeat in New South Wales, the Federal leader said that Labor was unquestionably met with a sweeping defeat. To ascertain the actual causes of this political setback should be one of the most important matters for the Conference. Personally, he attributed defeat to sectarianism and the vilifying attacks by members of their own party on members of the Cabinet. If the Movement was to be brought back to prestige it had to be placed before the interests of individuals. Sectionalism or any form of cliquism on the part of a few individuals might easily disintegrate the Party and bring the fabric of the Movement tumbling about their ears.

As regards the new objective passed by the Brisbane Conference, Mr Charlton said that he personally believed that such proposals, while worthy of consideration, should not be adopted by the Party. He claimed that the present objective provided a policy suitable for the workers, and would commend itself to the great majority of the electors of the Commonwealth.

A hearty vote of thanks to the Federal Leader for his able discourse was carried.
Representation on the Executive

Mr Geddes (Federated Society of Boilermakers) moved: “That in the opinion of Conference no two delegates from any one Trade Union or Labor League shall be eligible to accept a position on the ALP Executive Committee.” Mr Lynch (AWU) opposed the motion. He said that for a Union of 100,000 members to be restricted to one representative only on the Executive while the smallest League or Union could have equal representation was a farce. There was the case of the AWU. Its money had been the backbone of the ALP in every emergency. The motion was defeated on the voices.

Day 2, Monday, 5 June 1922

Executive's Report

All day Monday was devoted to discussing the Executive’s report for the past year. The President allowed delegates the utmost freedom in debating the various happenings since last Conference. As a result the discussion was at times of a spirited nature.

Labor’s defeat at the last election was exhaustively dealt with, and various reasons for the setback were put forward. Some delegates blamed the method of selecting candidates, others the regimenting of the vote. Sectarianism was set down by some delegates as the prime factor responsible for defeat, while others contended that there was “a streak of yellow” within the Movement as well as outside it. Others again blamed the Parliamentary Party for “going slow” with Labor’s policy disheartening supporters, and bringing about a general feeling of apathy.

The Executive’s action in expelling Mr Catts was applauded. His bona fides as a working-class advocate had long been questioned by many delegates, while some asserted that prior to his expulsion he was taking active steps to form a new party.

The Upper House appointments came in for a great deal of criticism; also the action of Executive members continuing to hold their positions on the Executive after their election to the Upper House. Mention was also made of the absence of Upper House members during the recent filling of the Senate vacancy, with the result that the Labor candidate (ex-Senator Grant) was defeated.

Several amendments were moved by delegates, but these were defeated and the Executive’s report was finally adopted by 132 votes to 15.
Labor’s New Objective. Discussion at NSW Labor Conference

Last night at the NSW Labor Conference, discussion was commenced on Labor’s new objective, as passed by the Interstate Conference held at Brisbane in October, 1921. Mr G Gibbons moved the following motion: “That this Conference endorses the action of its delegates at the last Interstate Conference, held at Brisbane on October 10, 1921, and now instructs the Executive to take the necessary steps to summon a special Interstate Conference with a view to maintaining the present objective of the ALP”.

In answer to a delegate, the President (Mr Power) ruled that by the decision of the Brisbane Conference the new objective automatically replaced the old objective throughout the Commonwealth and would remain the objective until such times as it was varied.

Messrs MA Davidson, JM Baddeley, D Murray, MsLA, EC Magrath and Kendrey spoke in favour of the new objective, while opposition was voiced by Senator Gardiner, Mr WF Dunn, MLA, Messrs H Brown, Beckett, J Grant and several other delegates. The debate is still proceeding.

Capitalism and Competition

“No successful capitalist wants competition for himself – he only wants it for the working class, so that he can buy his labor power at the lowest competitive price in the labor market. The simple truth is that competition in industrial life belongs to the past, and is practically outgrown. The time is approaching when it will no longer be possible.” Eugene V Debs

Day 3, Tuesday, 6 June 1922


Arising out of a statement at the NSW Labor Conference on June 5 by Mr Lazzarini, MLA, that Mr G McGirr, MLA, had been partly responsible for Labor’s defeat at the last election because of his denouncement of what he called “Dooleyism,” ex-Ministers indulged in some plain speaking before the Conference.

On June 6 Mr McGirr addressed delegates on the charge made against him by Mr Lazzarini. The reason for Labor’s defeat, he said, was the action of men like Mr Lazzarini in opposing the basic wage. (Uproar) Mr Mutch, MLA, jumped up in the body of the hall and declared that the statement was false. Mr McGirr said that Mr Mutch was another Minister who fought against it. (Further uproar) Mr McGirr added that Mr Mutch
came to him with tears in his eyes, and asked for a letter exonerating him from the charge of voting against the basic wage proposal in Cabinet, so that he could win the selection for Botany. “I took pity on you and gave it,” added Mr McGirr. At this Conference became noisier than ever. Mr Mutch endeavoured to speak, but his remarks could not be heard.

Cabinet Against Him

After order had been restored, Mr McGirr continued his remarks. He said he had been accused of losing the elections. He objected to colleagues stating that he had handed Labor over to the enemy. Several months ago inspired attacks appeared in the daily press that could have only come from his colleagues. He saw then that he was going to have a rough passage in the Cabinet.

He was dragged over the coals by the Cabinet because he promised to bring in a measure for Motherhood Endowment. His colleagues said he exceeded his duties. In order to force the hand of the Cabinet he had to arrange a big deputation of women to wait upon him. Several women delegates at the Conference could verify what he said.

His refusal to gazette the basic wage was opposed by some of his Cabinet colleagues. It was the action of those men that had brought about the defeat of the Government. He mentioned the names of Messrs Loughlin, Mutch and Lazzarini. Mr Lazzarini came to him and said that the workers were in favour of reduced wages because if the £4/5/- was retained it would mean more unemployment. (Uproar)

“Half-and-Half Labor Men”

The whole cause of the trouble was that he offended a few brewers and bookmakers by threatening to get money from them by taxation. If the Labor Movement got into the hands of brewers and bookmakers, then God help it!

He concluded by saying that it was men like Loughlin, Lazzarini, Mutch, and other half-and-half Labor men who were responsible for Labor’s loss at the elections.

Day 4, Wednesday, 7 June 1922

On the following night the matter was again before Conference. Mr Loughlin, MLA, secured the suspension of the standing orders and moved the following motion: “That this Conference forthwith provide a full opportunity to Mr McGirr to complete his remarks of the previous evening, and to any other delegate to express his views on the matter”.

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“Some Secret History”

Mr Loughlin prefaced his remarks by saying that he wanted the matter cleared up once and for all time. He said he intended to tell delegates some secret history. He gave a complete denial to the allegations made by Mr McGirr. Cabinet did not rebuke Mr McGirr for bringing forward the Motherhood Endowment Bill. The late Mr Storey considered it one of the most important measures from the Labor point of view, and put Mr McGirr in charge of the matter to enable him to devote all his time to getting the necessary information in order to draw up a proper bill. It was 18 months before Mr McGirr brought the matter forward, and delegates would be surprised to hear that he proposed to finance it per medium of a poll-tax on adults. This suggestion was ridiculed by the Cabinet and was not given serious consideration. That matter had never before been mentioned, not even to the rank and file members of the Party.

The Basic Wage

As regards the basic wage, the Cabinet was faced with a serious position. Mr McGirr had refused to gazette the basic wage. They were informed by the Attorney-General (Mr McTiernan) that a feeling existed in legal circles that if they did not gazette the basic wage there would be no basic wage at all. It was treacherous and cowardly on the part of Mr McGirr to go outside the Cabinet room and accuse colleagues of being against the basic wage. It was merely a matter of difference on the methods to be employed. It was Messrs Gosling and Davidson who suggested legislation to maintain the basic wage of £4/5/- and not Mr McGirr. But did they think the Upper House would allow that measure to go through? When he mentioned it to Mr McGirr, the latter said: “Well, what does it matter? It’s good enough dope for the mugs outside”.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA: That is a lie.

Mr Loughlin said it was the truth and there were other members who would bear out his statement. Ministers took the view that the proper course to pursue was to refer it back to the Board of Trade and have it re-determined on a fairer basis. Personally, he thought that if they had gone about the matter constitutionally there were enough members in the Upper House who had principle enough to have been willing to agree to a measure to maintain the basic wage at the old standard. (Laughter)

The Sydney Selection

In connection with the Department of Labor and Industry, it was not true that Mr McGirr had been put out of that office. He went to Mr Dooley
and asked to be relieved of the position as the work was too much for him. He condemned Mr McGirr’s action in revealing Cabinet secrets.

Mr Loughlin concluded his speech by making reference to alleged corruption in connection with the Sydney selection ballot. He said that Mr Catts had made definite charges. (Laughter) In answer to a question, he said Ministers took the view that it was better to assure the workers £4/2/- per week than allow them to be without a basic wage, and compel them to fight through the courts for a living wage.

**Mr Lazzarini’s Denial**

Mr Lazzarini, MLA, also denied the charges made against him by Mr McGirr. He had never opposed the basic wage, either in Cabinet or caucus, and asserted that Mr McGirr was not responsible for the Motherhood Endowment Bill. He simply became connected with it because of the fact that he was appointed Minister for Motherhood. It was a lie on the part of Mr McGirr to say that he (Mr Lazzarini) favoured the reduction of the basic wage to prevent unemployment, and contended that his Trade Union experience and regard for the workers was greater than that of Mr McGirr. He supported the statements of Mr Loughlin as regards the history of the Motherhood Endowment Bill and the basic wage developments. Mr McGirr was the man in the party least responsible for the Motherhood Employment Bill.

**A Personal Letter**

Mr Mutch, MLA, hoped that Conference would settle the matter once and for all by appointing an investigating committee. He traced the origin of Mr McGirr’s accusation to a report in the *Daily Telegraph* of January 18 last, in which it was stated that at a meeting of the Party on the previous day Mr McGirr charged five of his colleagues – Messrs McKell, Loughlin, Lazzarini, Cann and himself – with having voted against the basic wage, and that Mr Loughlin had there attacked Mr McGirr in connection with the matter. This was a deliberate lie. No reference had been made at that meeting to the basic wage, and Mr Loughlin did not even speak. Mr McGirr afterwards denied the newspaper report, and in response to a request from him (Mr Mutch) wrote him a personal letter in which he specifically denied the statement in the press. That was the letter Mr McGirr said he came whining to him to get.

**“Bullied and Browbeaten”**

Mr Mutch said it was a strange thing that Mr McGirr could not produce one Cabinet Minister who would back up his charges of opposition to the basic wage or Motherhood Endowment. No such Minister existed.
He accused Mr McGirr of making reckless statements against members of Parliament who would not see eye to eye with him in his nefarious schemes. He (Mr Mutch) had been bullied and browbeaten because he would not fall in with Mr McGirr’s schemes. However, he would stake his reputation in the Labor Movement against that of Mr McGirr, who had been nothing else than a limelighter ever since he assumed office.

**Day 5, Thursday, 8 June 1922**

On the following evening (June 8) Mr G McGirr was present at Conference to reply to the statements made by Messrs Mutch, Loughlin and Lazzarini. He stated that he had just returned from the country for the purpose of being able to refute the charges made against him. He opened by referring to the campaign directed against him through the columns of the daily press during the basic wage discussion some months ago, and indicated how it was worked. It was untrue to say that he was revealing Cabinet secrets. He was merely replying to Cabinet secrets divulged by other Ministers per medium of the capitalist press. He contended that the greatest curse to the Labor Movement was caucus secrecy. It was a whitewash brush for hypocrites and scoundrels, and it was only when they were behind closed doors that they found out who the hypocrites were. (Applause)

**Jealous of his Popularity**

It has been said that he knew nothing of industrial matters. He admitted frankly that he was a country man. Then why was he appointed Minister for Labor and Industry by the men who now condemned him? There must have been some ulterior motive for the appointment. The plain truth was that his colleagues were jealous of the popularity he was getting because of his administrations of the Health and Motherhood Department. So they got together and said: “Let’s put him in a position where he’ll break his neck. We’ll take the damned popularity out of him. We’ll put him in a Department that will ruin him”.

**The Basic Wage Declaration**

At that time a reduction in the basic wage had been ordered by the Board of Trade. The day he took over control of the Department of Labor and Industry he found that behind his back the proclamation ordering the reduction in the basic wage had been sent to the Government Printer. Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, informed him what had been done, adding,
“They were trying to put it over you, so as to make you black with the workers”. An investigation by his private secretary confirmed what Mr Stuart-Robertson had said. He immediately wrote a minute forbidding the publication of the proclamation. Next day the capitalist press came out with reports attacking him for “flouting the judge”, and refusing to carry out the dictates of the Board of Trade. His colleagues were like ferocious lions, and accused him of limelighting. Mr Loughlin, MLA, said, “You’re looking for money to finance your Motherhood Endowment Scheme. We’ll save you £200,000 by reducing the wages of the public servants, and you can have the money for Motherhood Endowment”. Mr Lazzarini also objected to what he had done. Mr Mutch said his teachers had to take less wages than outside workers and contended that the wages of outside workers should be reduced. Mr Dooley said they would have to get legal opinion, and saw Mr McTiernan on the matter. Mr McTiernan ruled that if they didn’t gazette the basic wage there would be no basic wage whatever in force, and the employers could pay what they liked. “My horse-sense taught me better than that,” added Mr McGirr.

A Cabinet Paradox

From then on there was a strong move to try and compel him to gazette the basic wage reduction. What he wanted to know was why they put him in charge of the Department at all, and why the proclamation of the declaration was ordered behind his back. He could think of no other reason than that they wanted to degrade him. At the Cabinet table he said that if ever there was a paradox it was here. He, who had not been trained in Unionism, was the only Labor man honest enough to oppose a reduction of wages, with Unionist Ministers against him. When the news leaked out, Labor men outside the Party stood solid behind him, and when the other Ministers saw this, they rushed to cover.

“I ask you, delegates,” said Mr McGirr, “did you ever see another Minister come out and stand by me in my fight against the reduction of the basic wage? You did not. I tell you that men like Lazzarini, Mutch and Loughlin are a curse to the Labor Movement. It was sorrowful to sit with men who were so spineless. Even the capitalists were praising them as ‘moderate’ men. Ask them why they were always cheek by jowl with Jimmy Catts against me?” Mr McGirr added that Messrs Storey, Loughlin, and Lazzarini were members of the infamous P and O organisation, and when the Executive took action Storey and Loughlin said they were sick of the action of the ALP in dealing with the organisation, and were going to stick to their pals.
The Basic Wage Bill

After he had been attacked for refusing to gazette the basic wage declaration, he took the matter to caucus, and a resolution was passed to introduce a bill to fix a basic wage. Notwithstanding that, Mr Dooley said that no such bill would be introduced. Mr Kavanagh objected to the abolition of the Board of Trade. This was only natural, as Mr Kavanagh was a member of the Board. When he took the measure to the Cabinet he found his colleagues hostile to it. But Mr Kavanagh said, “Don’t let him take it back to caucus. He’ll show them that we are against him.”

When he did introduce the bill in Parliament there was great laughter from the “Nationalists,” who said: “Hello, McGirr has had a win over them, after all”. He denied that his colleagues were in favour of the bill. It was only when they saw it was popular that they got under cover and became ardent supporters of it. When they first opposed the measure he said, “Surely you don’t want it to be said that a Labor Government is in favour of cutting the wages of the workers. If you are not willing to save them 3/- per week, how can you make them believe that you’ll give them the millennium?”

“No Better than the ‘Nationalists’”

The Railway Commissioners made a move to reduce the wages of railway workers by 3/- per week in the Arbitration Court. Union officials came to him and asked that counsel be briefed to oppose the application of the Commissioners. He claimed it was the duty of the Government to prevent the Commissioners making any such application. When he decided to take up the fight on behalf of the railway unions, he raised another hornet’s nest around his head. Mr McTiernan said he had exceeded his duties, and went to Mr Dooley, who sent for him and said, “You must not do these things.” He (Mr McGirr) replied: “Are you going to let their wages be cut without putting up a fight? That’s no better than the ‘Nationalists’ would do. If you won’t order counsel to appear, I’ll pay for counsel out of my own pocket”.

When the Basic Wage Bill was placed before Parliament he was confident that efforts would be made to prevent it becoming law. The first reading got through all right, but at the second reading stage Mr Lang was put up on the Budget speech to block the bill. Mr Dooley had told prominent men in the city that the £4/5/- Basic Wage Bill would never see the light of day. And it never did. If the Ministry was sincere about the matter, it could have rushed the bill through the House at one sitting, just as it did with the Wheat Marketing Bill, and had it tested in the Upper House. That would have shown the workers that they were genuine.
No Money for Motherhood Endowment

Mr McGirr claimed that the Cabinet had no intention of allowing the Motherhood Endowment Bill to become law. Following the deputation of women who asked for some relief, and his promise of 6/- per week for every child above the number of two, members of the Cabinet said he had a cheek to bind the Cabinet on a matter like that. McGirr replied that it was only a matter of a million and a half, and he would see where they would get the money. A committee was appointed, and various suggestions made, which were presented to Cabinet. The poll-tax was only one of them. It was the committee’s suggestion, not his. In his Budget speech, Mr Lang, MLA, admitted that he had made no provision for the financing of the measure, and when he asked him why no provision had been made, he said, “You get the money yourself”. Mr McGirr said he would get it from the Coal Vend, and other combines, and from bookmakers and brewers. Then he was told that if he did that he would ruin the Movement.

“Friends of Jimmy Catts”

“I tell you,” said Mr McGirr, “That the worst samples of representatives in our Movement are the men who have been taken from the ranks of the workers. It is a sorry state of affairs, but it is true. They say that I am no Labor man, although I have been 20 years in the Movement. The men who say this are Messrs Mutch, Lazzarini, and Loughlin, who are friends of Jimmy Catts, and who are working with him against me. They were working men, and when they were elevated to the Ministry they hobnobbed with the aristocracy, and so enjoyed it that they forgot their Labor principles. I can tell you now that had Mr Storey been alive, and had these men had their way, they would have been in a coalition with the ‘Nationalists’ by now. I am opposed to half-baked Labor men coming here and attacking me, and I hope the Conference will carry a motion that will unmask these enemies of the Movement.”

The Letter to Mr Mutch

In answer to questions, Mr McGirr said that he gave Mr Mutch a letter exonerating him on the basic wage question because he was having difficulty with his selection. He did that out of pity for him. He regretted having done that, in view of subsequent events. But what Mr Mutch did not tell the Conference was that he (Mr Mutch) wrote the “Dear Tom” letter himself on his own typewriter, and sent it along for him (McGirr) to sign. When it was said that the Upper House would not pass the Basic Wage Bill, he advocated packing the Upper House. They could have done it – they could have put 100 men there if they liked – and the
Governor wouldn’t have objected. If he had, they could have got another Governor from Downing Street. The Governor would have done what he was told. All statements to the contrary were so much dope only fit for children. He added that he wanted to continue the life of Parliament to pass the Basic Wage and Mother Endowment Bills, but other Ministers preferred to see the workers thrown to the wolves.

**Mr Molesworth’s Explanation**

Mr Molesworth, MLA, said he opposed Mr McGirr’s actions on the question of the basic wage because he was convinced that if the proclamation had not been issued there would have been no basic wage at all, and the employers could have paid the workers what they liked. The basic wage would not have passed the Upper House; Levy would have resigned, and the Motherhood Endowment Bill would have been lost. And that was what actually happened. He was opposed to the full light of publicity being thrown on doings in the caucus room.

**The Legal Aspect of the Basic Wage**

Mr McTiernan, MLA, made an explanation regarding the legal position arising out of the non-gazettal of the basic wage. He claimed that the Board of Trade could order the issue of the proclamation, and that Ministers could not prevent it. If it was not gazetted the basic wage would lapse, and the workers could be reduced back to the former wage of £3/17/- per week. As a matter of fact, the employers did go to the Court and got the wages reduced. It was unjust to accuse him of being against the basic wage of £4/5/-.

**Favoured the Reduction**

Mr J Birt, MLA, referred to his opposition to Mr McGirr’s action in not gazetting the basic wage. He contended there had been decreases in the cost of living and as they were on a falling market he thought it better to agree to the reduction and fix it at that, than have other reductions made later on owing to lower prices. But when the Basic Wage Bill was introduced he and others lined up solid in support of it.

Mr Buckley, MLA, also made a statement along similar lines to the others in reply to Mr McGirr.
Committee Appointed

Mr G Cross moved that a committee be appointed by Conference, consisting of two delegates and two members of Parliament, with an independent chairman, to inquire into and report to Conference upon the allegations of Messrs McGirr, Mutch, Loughlin and Lazzarini. Messrs Lavelle, MHR, Watkins, MHR, Magrath and Hutchinson, with the President (Mr J Power) as chairman, were appointed.

The New Executive

The following is the result of the election for positions on the Executive of the New South Wales Branch of the ALP for the current year:

President: Mr J M Power, MLC
Vice-Presidents (2): Messrs GH Buckland and W Martin
Interstate Executive (2): Messrs JM Power, MLC, and J Bailey, MLA
Interstate Conference Delegates (6): Messrs J Power, MLC, WJ Mahony and WH Lambert, MsHR, JM Baddeley, MLA, W Carey and Mrs K Dwyer
General Executive (30): Mrs K Dwyer, Messrs D McLelland, J F Higgins, Miss EM O’Sullivan, Messrs GH Sutherland, Cecil Last, PV Stokes, G Rowlands, HL Brown, EC O’Dea, Mrs M Benson, Messrs JM Kelly, J Coates, T Thick, WR Colbourne, JB Dooley, V McCauley, EA Roberts, Mrs Devitt, Messrs J White, J Tyrrell, PJ Dunn, J Potter, Mrs M Bailey, Messrs W Hutchison, WJ Mills, Mrs Seery, Messrs T S Bartle, TP Lonergan, Mrs Melville

The following were declared elected as alternate delegates to the State Executive: Messrs C Carroll, C Hackett, W Ely, Miss Golding, Mr ES Beeby, Miss S Mitchell, Messrs EC Magrath, TJ Swiney, E Cross, T Doyle, WJS Carroll, WA Gibbs, AH Moate, RD Bramston, W Padgen, W Seale, J Culbert, J Mostyn, Miss L Fowler, Messrs AE Vernon, W Colbourne, G Gallagher, Ned Riley, R Bates, G Buckley, Miss E Kelly, Mrs J Kirwin, Mr W Sturgess, Mrs J Grant and Mr W J Gibb.

(Report from the Australian Worker, 14 June 1922)

Debate on Brisbane Objective

The discussion on the new objective of the Australian Labor Party, as decided by the Brisbane Interstate Conference last October, was commenced at the NSW Labor Conference on Tuesday, June 6 last.
Mr G Gibbons (Murrumbidgee) moved: “That this Conference endorses the action of its delegates at the last Interstate Conference, held at Brisbane on October 10, 1921, and now invites the Executive to take the necessary steps to summon a special Interstate Conference with a view to maintaining the present objective of the Australian Labor Party.”

Mr Gibbons contended that the present objective was sufficiently wide to embrace all working-class interests. He did not see any reason why the objective should be changed. The utterances of some of the delegates at the Brisbane Conference were foreign to Australian sentiment.

**Breach Must Be Healed**

Mr MA Davidson, MLA, opposed the motion. There was a large rift between the political and industrial wings of the Movement that had to be healed. The present motion was a reactionary one, and to carry it would be to brand themselves as reactionaries. The old objective was only a means to an objective. The new objective provided what would be done when the stage covered by the old objective was reached. It was all very well to talk about nationalisation, but were the workers in the railways any better off than those under private Capitalism? When they were able to take control of industries, what were they going to do with them if not socialise them? Why fence with words? Some of the delegates “got the wind up” simply because Labor lost the recent elections.

Mr EC Magrath (Printing Trades) hoped that Labor would stand by the new objective. It had been misrepresented both inside and outside the Movement. No real objection could be taken to it. The old objective was nothing more than generalisation; the new objective was something definite. Mr H Brown (Ryde) supported the motion. Mr D Murray, MLA, opposed the motion. There must be linking up of the industrial and political wings, otherwise Labor would suffer. Even the capitalists linked up solidly against the workers, but the latter were fighting amongst themselves. Some delegates condemned the Council of Action, but did they not have Councils of Action within the Labor Movement?

**Senator Gardiner and “Side-Stepping”**

Senator Gardiner claimed that there was nothing in the old objective that did not make for progress. Did they oppose it because it was too Australian? Did they want something made in another country? He was an Australian, and did not see where they were going to gain anything from the new objective. They would lose seats throughout the Commonwealth unless the old objective was restored. Didn’t they realise that in elections they had to side-step? They had to compromise. He claimed that to bring in the new objective was stepping backwards.
Australian Labor led the world in progress, under the old objective, and that was good enough for him. He opposed the new objective. Mr Beckett (Ryde) said he would vote for the motion. Mr Kendrey (Randwick) said they would have to do everything they could to consolidate the Movement. The people had to be economically educated. The goal of the Movement was Socialism, whether they liked it or not. They should not be afraid of any bogey raised by the capitalist press, which would raise some bogey against Labor even if there was no objective at all.

"Tell the Workers the Truth"

Mr JM Baddeley, MLA, said he intended to leave no mistake as to where he stood. Politicians had stated that the new objective was syndicalism. They were wrong, and didn't know what syndicalism really was. Politicians who opposed the new objective were little better than editors of the capitalist press. It was time for them to consider where they were going to take their place in the working class Movement. They would have to get down to bedrock. If they could not run the Labor Movement better at the present time, then it was high time they handed it over to the Industrial Movement to manage.

He was as good an Australian as Senator Gardiner, and would debate the new objective with him any day he liked. They had pledged themselves at the All-Australian Congress to see that the new objective would be carried out. He regretted to say that some of them had turned traitors. At Brisbane Catts and others spoke like editors of the capitalist press. He had always told his political supporters the truth that they would not get emancipation per medium of a Parliament of a capitalist State. Others were not so honest. He wasn’t concerned about losing his seat, but he was concerned about the emancipation of the workers. The big Unions had adopted the new objective, and if the officials of those Unions were not going to stand up to it, then the rank and file would know about it. This was not a time for gerrymandering.

Mr Dunn’s Objection

Mr Dunn, MLA, opposed the new objective, claiming it to be visionary. If it was retained it would keep Labor out of office for 50 years. He contended that the old objective gave them everything they wanted. Mr EJ Stein also opposed any alteration in the objective. He regretted that the matter had been brought up at all. Mr J Grant said he did not understand what was meant by the new objective, and was opposed to it.

Mr JP Dunn moved the following amendment: “That this Conference expresses the opinion that the objective arrived at by the Brisbane Conference is bourgeois in its incidence and absolutely negatives the international revolutionary character of the efforts of the world’s workers
in their endeavour to secure an economic change from their chains of slavery, and that we inform the Labor Movement in Australia that we stand for a straight-out industrial republic based on a working class recognition of international thought and action, and the world-wide slogan of ‘the world for the world’s workers.’”

**Day 6, Friday, 9 June 1922**

**Mr Blakeley Stands by New Objective**

Discussion was resumed on the objective on June 9. Mr A Blakeley, MHR, opposed the motion moved by Mr Gibbons to refer the matter back to another Interstate Conference. He stood by the Brisbane objective. It was foolish to say that the new objective was the dream of visionaries. Realising that a big section of the Industrial Movement was drifting away from Labor, the Interstate Executive called the all-Australian TU Congress. At that Congress there were 250 delegates present, 85 per cent of whom were supporters of the ALP. It was one of the most important conferences ever held in the Commonwealth. Proposals opposed to political action were defeated by large majorities, showing that the delegates were behind the ALP. The Congress made certain resolutions to bring the industrial wing into closer touch with the political body. Delegates at that Congress pledged themselves to stand by the decisions. The Interstate Conference met in Brisbane and ratified the decision of the Melbourne Congress, as far as the objective was concerned. Since then the objective had received more hostility from men within the Labor Movement than outside it. An attempt had been made to make it a fight of Australian against anti-Australian. How anybody could call the new objective anti-Australian he failed to see. The ‘Socialist Tiger’ bogey, which had been trotted out by their opponents until it had rotted away, was now resurrected by men and women within the Movement. He contended the objective was all right if they had the courage to stand behind it.

**AWU behind Brisbane Objective**

The next All-Australian TU Congress would probably be more ALP than the previous one, but if the present Conference expressed its opposition to the Brisbane objective it would give those people who fought the ALP at the last Congress the very weapon they were looking for. He was surprised to see that some delegates were getting cold feet over the proposition. There was no occasion to drag in the IWW and Bolshevism, as some people had done. They should be prepared to meet the
industrialists half-way. There could not be any success unless both wings of the Movement were walking side by side. The AWU had always stuck to the ALP and had put thousands of pounds into it. He had to tell delegates that the AWU was solidly behind the new objective. If Conference repudiated this objective it said in so many words that the AWU was on the wrong track. He ridiculed those men and women who said that the new objective smacked of IWW-ism and Communism. It was an objective the Movement could carry. They had carried heavier loads than this in the past. But to throw the new objective back into the teeth of the All-Australian Congress was another way of saying that they did not want solidarity or the support of the industrialists.

**An End to Apathy**

Mr J McGarry supported the Brisbane objective. The rank and file of the workers were out of touch with the ALP. If Conference endorsed the new objective and stood up to it, then there would be an end of that apathy which had spelt disaster to them in the past. He hoped that Conference would not ask for another Interstate Conference.

Mrs Fowler was opposed to the Brisbane objective. She feared that the Supreme Economic Council would displace Parliament, also that Labor would not get into power with the new objective. She thought they should confine their activities to trying to get Labor into power so that some immediate relief should be given to the workers and their families.

**Opposed to Economic Councils**

Mr McClelland (Blacksmiths) moved a further amendment: “That this Conference adopts the Brisbane objective, and the Federal Executive be requested to call immediately a special Interstate Conference for the purpose of reviewing the machinery clauses, and also for deleting sub-clause “F,” which reads as follows: “The establishment of an Elective Supreme Economic Council by all nationalised industries”. As an industrialist he favoured the objective, with the exception of the proposal to form Economic Councils, which meant setting up industrial parliaments to displace the present parliamentary system.

Mr W Colbourne claimed that the old objective was good enough for the workers. The new objective would be used by their political opponents at the next elections. He claimed that it was not democratic. The industrialists were not the backbone of the Labor Movement and would not put Labor into Parliament. They had to have the support of the other people as well.
Capitalism’s Economic Councils

Mr T Holloway (AWU) in supporting the Brisbane objective, said that the Economic Council would not displace the Parliamentary machinery of today, but would pave the way for economic justice for the workers. Why were they opposed to Economic Councils? Didn’t the capitalists have their economic councils? There was the financial economic council of the capitalists which had been responsible for Australia’s staggering war debt of well on the way to £500,000,000. There were the commercial and mercantile economic councils of Capitalism which bled the people white for profits. Then there was the industrial economic council of the capitalists which forced men into the trenches during the war for a few paltry shillings a day. In England it had conscripted six million workers at a miserable dole. To the extent that the workers as soldiers had been paid less than the wage of an artisan, to that extent they had been robbed by the Industrial Economic Council of Capitalism. He claimed that the industrialists should be given power. They produced the wealth and bore all the burden, but were treated worse than animals. The capitalists fed their horses whether they were working or not, but when a man ceased work he starved. They should take no note of what the capitalist press was saying. It would always attack them, whether they had an objective or none at all.

Political Expediency Advocated

Mr M Gosling, MLA, counselled strategy. They were near to a Federal election and he wanted to see Labor elected. He claimed that if Labor won the Federal elections the present objective would enable them to do all they wished. It would enable them to nationalise industries per medium of the Commonwealth Bank without the spending of a single penny piece. It would also enable them to force a levy on the capitalists who had made fortunes out of the war. They hadn’t exploited the possibilities of the present objective; it could be made as revolutionary as possible. He thought the Brisbane objective should be dropped, otherwise it would embarrass them at the coming Federal elections.

Mrs Bailey also opposed the Brisbane objective. She was just as militant as any other delegate, but a ‘moderate’ militant. She hoped they would vote for another Interstate Conference. Mr Manuel (Northern Rivers) wanted to know if there was not much difference between the two objectives, as some speakers had alleged, what was the reason for all this debate? He did not think the Movement was going fast enough. In 1917 Fuller had taken over the coal mines and worked them, but Labor, instead of taking over the Broken Hill mines, had let the workers starve. It was nearly time they gave the new objective a chance. The old objective didn’t seem to get them anywhere.
Attack on Bob Ross

Mrs K Dwyer said the only reason why she and others at the Brisbane Conference opposed the new objective was that they did not think the time was ripe enough for its introduction. She claimed that some of the twenty-four delegates at Brisbane pledged to support the new objective spoke as if they were personally opposed to it. She made special reference to the speeches by Mr RS Ross, claiming that they showed him to be intoxicated with make-believe words, which would be all right about 50 years ahead. He and others claimed that they had 700,000 workers behind them. That was not true. She thought it was nearly time they gave up the ‘dope’ of promising workers something that could not be got for at least 100 years. They had to get into Parliament first. The old objective went far enough.

Mr H Dale supported the Brisbane objective. They should place principles first and not exist for the purpose of emancipating politicians. Up to date the efforts of politicians had been 90 per cent ineffective. Democracy went further than politics; it must be in the workshops, and until then the workers would never be emancipated. He ridiculed the statements by Senator Gardiner and others, who predicted chaos if the Socialisation of Industry was put into operation. Socialisation would be carried out scientifically, and there would be no dislocation whatever. The intelligent writers and speakers of the Guild Socialist movement in England showed the way it could be done. They must go ahead. The old objective was out-of-date and only gave them a miserable wage system.

Thinking 100 Years Ahead

Mr Parker Moloney, MHR, failed to see where the new objective was going to make the people one whit better off than they were today. He did not think it was worth anything to the workers, but would provide the ‘Nationalists’ with the whip they wanted to flog Labor at the coming Federal elections. He claimed that under the old objective they could give all the people what they wanted, but the new objective would scare people away from the Labor movement. Men and women were looking for something to benefit them now – not 100 years hence.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that under the new objective they laid it down that those who produced would get the full product of their labor. Didn’t they believe in that? Was there anything dishonest about that? What was Labor coming to if it opposed that? Under the operation of the Supreme Economic Council the industries would support the workers when they were not working as well as when they were working. Did they oppose that? Or did they still stand for the present system whereby the capitalists controlled the factories and sweated the workers as much as they liked?
“Get Down to Bedrock”

They opposed the workers controlling the factories – they said it was not democracy. Then they must be in favour of the capitalists controlling the factories for profit. It was time the Labor Movement got down to bedrock instead of trimming all the time. They had wasted time for 20 years. Let them support the Brisbane objective and carry out Labor’s true policy of emancipating the workers.

Day 7, Saturday, 10 June 1922

The debate on the Brisbane objective was resumed on Saturday afternoon (June 10). Mr AA Jones (Clerks) thought they should be very careful about taking on a new objective at the present time. They should not give their opponents a chance to attack them, as they would if the new objective was adopted. Mr Dalley (Woollahra) also opposed the new objective. He didn’t think the workers would stand behind it. It was an extreme objective.

Who Should Control the Industries?

Mr Ward (Wharf Laborers) said that those who opposed the new objective were practising the same expediency as Holman and others and which had almost ruined the Labor Movement. To talk of nationalising industry under the old objective only meant that they were going to change from private Capitalism to State Capitalism, which was even worse. The industries must be socialised and controlled by those who worked them. It would be as good for the farmer to control his own products as for the industrialist to control his own workshop.

Mr F Burke, MLA, claimed that to adopt the new objective would be to bring about a radical alteration in the form of government. The object, he claimed, was to wipe out Parliament altogether. They were all for the emancipation of the workers, though they differed in methods. He contended they could get all they desired under the old objective. They should move slowly at the present time, and get back on the Treasury benches as soon as possible. But they would not do so with the new objective.

Mr Amos (Eastern Suburbs) opposed the Brisbane objective, claiming that it conflicted with the Australian sentiment. He didn’t think the people were ready for socialisation. Let them win the Federal elections, and under the old objective they would get all they desired. The workers were only entitled to a fair reward for their labour, and that was all they wanted.
Shadow-Sparring by Politicians

Mr T Rickards (Musicians’ Union) supported the Brisbane objective. There were always a lot of delegates ready to cry, “don’t go too far or you’ll frighten the electors”. It was time they gave up that way of thinking. The Labor Movement was now reaping what it had sown in preaching that doctrine. They should do away with camouflage. The people wanted a definite programme, not an exhibition of shadow-spar-ring by politicians. The mental psychology of the people was such that they were prepared to receive the truth. The Movement should come out and preach the new objective. There was a very vital difference between nationalisation and socialisation. The former was only State Capitalism. They had a splendid example of socialisation in the public libraries and parks where people enjoyed the benefits without payment. Was it wrong to demand the dictatorship of the workers? The only alternative to that was the dictatorship of the capitalists, which was in operation today. Did they want that to continue? The cry that half a loaf was better than no bread was the hackneyed cry of capitalists and the capitalist press.

Old Objective should be Retained

Mr AW Buckley opposed the Brisbane objective claiming that they would never get into power with it on the platform. Mr O’Dea (Shop Assistants) said he, as one of the delegates at the Brisbane Conference, had voted against it, though he was not instructed to do so. Nobody was able to explain what it meant. He wouldn’t oppose socialisation if he thought it could be brought about, but he didn’t think it could be brought about. They could not get socialisation by the Parliamentary system, and he contended it was better to stick to the old objective which would get them into Parliament. He attributed Labor’s defeat at the recent election in part to the new objective.

Mr Lynch (Railway Workers) was surprised to hear some delegates appealing for the cultivation of an Australian sentiment. During the war the same men were appealing to workers to go to foreign lands to shed their blood. The objection to the objective by politicians showed they were more concerned about their jobs than the welfare of the workers. If they wanted to see how nationalisation would work they had only to take the railways, where the Commissioners had introduced the infamous medical test for the purpose of victimising workers. Private capitalists had never done anything like that. There was a lot of cheap talk about ‘White Australia’, yet a couple of hundred yards away the vegetable markets were monopolised by Chinamen, and the Labor Government had done nothing to prevent it.
Would Benefit Farmers

The workers were worse off today than they were 30 years ago, and if the politicians wanted to enthuse the workers they would have to give them something they understood. The workers wanted the Brisbane objective, and it was high time they saw about the workers controlling industry. As far as the farmers were concerned, socialisation would mean that they would control their own wheat instead of the grain sharks controlling it as at present.

Mr E Clear (Albury), who claimed to be the only genuine farmer at the Conference, strongly opposed the Brisbane objective.

Mr Buckland’s Opposition

Mr G Buckland (Central Branch, AWU) strongly opposed the new objective. He claimed that there were not ten delegates who understood what it meant. Many of the delegates who were concerned about the new objective were not so much concerned about getting Labor’s daily press going, which was something material and not visionary. The Brisbane objective would not do all they desired. Delegates had got a false impression about it. It was not a matter of whether he personally favoured or condemned it, but whether it was to the interests of the people. The present objective would go as far as the new one, though it was in different words. To carry the new objective would be to place in the hands of their opponents something with which they could flog Labor. Their enemies would be able to distort Labor’s ideals if the new objective was carried. The old objective could not be distorted. Delegates at the Brisbane Conference were not allowed to give free expression to their thoughts, but were pledged to vote a certain way. The new objective would alienate the support of the great bulk of the people. If the new objective would carry them one inch further he would support it. But it was his opinion that instead of putting Labor into power it would keep Labor out of power. The people were not prepared to go as far as the Brisbane objective indicated.

Economic Councils Explained

Mr J O’Brien resented delegates making continual use of the “I’m an Australian” phrase. It had a sinister motive. Men who used it were as bad as sectarian mongers. He favoured the Brisbane objective. If the old objective were suitable they should have shown more progress. They seemed afraid of forming Economic Councils, but there were Economic Councils at the present time such as the Employers’ Federation and the Chambers of Manufactures and Commerce. It was time the workers took the control of industry out of the hands of the capitalists. Wouldn’t these
Councils work for the advantage of the workers? Then why did they oppose them? The Railway Commissioners and the Harbor Trust were really Economic Councils, and they functioned alongside Parliament without clashing. The Economic Councils would control only industrial affairs, and wouldn’t interfere with Parliament.

All the politicians had to offer against the Brisbane objective was political expediency. He contended that the Industrial Movement would be consolidated if the Brisbane objective was adopted. Not one concrete argument had been advanced against it – it was political expediency all the time. If, as had been stated, delegates at the Brisbane Conference had been drunk with idealism, then delegates at this Conference who opposed it were drunk with conservatism. They should be more honest with the people.

**Thinks it Sovietism**

Mr B Olde (Western Suburbs) opposed the Brisbane objective, contending that behind it was Sovietism pure and simple. Mr Lavelle, MHR (AWU), was also opposed to the new objective. It was not the fault of the political action that they were not further advanced. It was the fault of the people themselves. In Queensland, under the old objective, the Government had been able to function in the interests of the people. He didn’t see what they would gain from the new objective that they could not gain from the old objective. Let them give Parliament adequate powers and they would accomplish all they desired. He objected to an outside body moulding their objective, as had been done at the All-Australian TU Congress. Some of the Unions had since repudiated the Brisbane objective, claiming it did not go far enough. If they altered the objective they would do something detrimental to the Movement, and prevent members gaining control of the Treasury benches either in the Federal or State Parliaments. The industrialists who were keen on the Brisbane objective were not so keen on raising money for Labor’s daily press. The workers wanted something immediately in the shape of higher wages and better living conditions, not something visionary.

**The AWU Constitution**

Mr Seale (Waterside Workers) said he was surprised at delegates of the AWU opposing the Brisbane objective. On the other hand, Mr Arthur Blakeley, MHR, who was General President, had put all his weight behind the new objective, yet men like Messrs Bailey, Buckland, Lavelle, and others were urging its rejection. Where was Mr Bailey, MLA, standing in the matter? The AWU and other Unions had recently taken a plebiscite on the OBU constitution.
Mr Bailey, MLA, interjected that the industry policy of the AWU was laid down by the Union, and the political policy by the Labor Conference.

Mr Seale: “I’ll show you where you stand. Rule 35 of the constitution of the Australasian Workers’ Union reads: ‘Any member of Parliament who fails to advocate the Preamble and Constitution of the Australasian Workers’ Union shall not be eligible to continue his membership in the Union’. And Rule 43 reads ‘The political policy of the Union shall be the decision of the 1921 All-Australian Trade Union Congress and the 1921 Brisbane Interstate ALP Conference, until altered by the Annual Convention.’”

“Sick and Tired of Trimming”

Mr Seale went on to say that the old objective allowed the politicians to wriggle, but the new objective would prevent their doing this. He was surprised at the action of Mr O’Dea in voting for the new objective at Melbourne and opposing it four months later at Brisbane. The new objective laid it down definitely how the industries were to be managed when socialised. The people were not scared by the Brisbane objective; they were sick and tired of the trimming of the politicians. He protested against the raising of the cry of Australian v anti-Australian. It was as bad as sectarianism.

Should be Reconsidered

The President (Mr J Power, MLC) addressed Conference on the subject. As one of the delegates who voted against the objective at Brisbane, he wanted to put his views before Conference. He was not opposed to it on the grounds that it was too socialistic, nor did he think the Movement would fall to pieces if it were retained. There was no repudiation of the Brisbane objective; only a motion that the Interstate Conference should again consider it. If the Interstate Conference again stood by the new objective he would do his best to justify it. He thought the majority of the States were willing to reconsider it. Some of the States had no time to consider it prior to the Brisbane Conference.

Mr T P Holloway: But four of the State Conferences have endorsed it since.

Mr Power said that if they got the people behind them, it wouldn’t matter if they stood for Socialisation, Communism, Syndicalism, or any other -ism. But they should give the people something they could understand. He wasn’t afraid of what the daily press said, but he wanted to see Labor get into power, and be able to say to the daily press: “If you don’t represent Labor’s position fairly and squarely we’ll close you up in 24 hours.”
Practical Politics Wanted

He contended that the objective passed at Brisbane was not the same as was passed by the Melbourne Congress. What right had they to say that 700,000 workers were behind them? It was not true. He questioned very much whether the Brisbane objective would be ratified by the next All-Australian TU Congress. At that very moment a conference of Unions sitting in the Trades Hall was forming a Workers’ Council of Australia—a new party. Was that solidifying the Movement? There was a section that would not have the Labor Movement at any price, though he would say that Mr J Garden had done his best to try and get Labor returned at the last election.

The people wanted practical politics. Today 40,000 men were being degraded because they had not the right to earn a living for themselves and their families. Let them do something for the unemployed instead of talking about a new objective. Until they had exploited the old objective they had no right to talk about a new one. Didn’t they think that if they started to socialise industry the Imperialists and British capitalists would have something to say on the matter? They would not give up their right without a fight, and the workers might have to shoulder something more than a new objective then. He urged delegates to get Labor’s daily press going first to educate the workers. Then they could talk about a new objective as much as they liked.

The debate having closed a vote was taken. All the amendments were defeated, and the motion moved by Mr Gibbons was carried by 97 to 77. Intense excitement prevailed while the vote was being taken.

Proposed Interstate Conference. Mr A Stewart’s Opinion

Mr Arch Stewart, Secretary of the Federal ALP Executive, when informed of the result of the voting on the Brisbane objective and the decision to request another Interstate Conference, said: “They have no hope. Already four States have declared in favour of the new objective”.

NSW Senate Vote. Order of Preference

A good deal of discussion took place at NSW Labor Conference on a report by the organising committee that the Senate Labor three should be voted 1, 2, 3 in the following order: A McDougall, J Grant and P McGirr. Mr Grant launched a strong objection to this proposal, claiming that under it one man would have a monopoly of votes. He suggested the cutting of the State into three areas. Mr A McDougall favoured the recommendation of the committee. He did not think any harm would happen by voting in the order suggested, while it was obvious that the
Movement in the selection ballots had voted for the candidates in their own order of preference.

After other delegates had expressed their opinion for and against the recommendation of the committee, the report was adopted.

Day 8, Monday, 12 June 1922

Charges and Counter Charges. Investigation Committee’s Report

On Monday, June 12, the NSW Labor Conference resumed discussion of the items on the agenda paper. Delegates from the Federal Storemen and Packers’ Union sought to censure the Parliamentary Labor Party and the Executive for alleged inactivity in connection with back pay due to members of the Union employed by the Harbor Trust. It was pointed out that the Parliamentary party and the Executive were desirous of having the money paid, and asked that it be paid, but the Harbor Trust refused to pay. As it was working under a special Act, which gave it sole governing powers, the late Labor Government was powerless to interfere. The motion was defeated.

Black and Tans

Mr JP Dunn desired to move the suspension of the Standing Orders to move the following motion: “That this Conference enters its emphatic protest against the action of the Federal Government in allowing the Commonwealth immigration officers to become a recruiting ground in the interests of the capitalists of Australia for the purpose of assisting members of the Black and Tans to enter Australia, because the action of these men, when overseas, stinks in the nostrils of decent men and women throughout the world”.

Delegates were of the opinion that already too much time had been wasted in granting suspensions of the Standing Orders, and the motion was defeated.

Primary Producers and Cooperation

The following motions were carried after a short discussion:-

“That the control of the restriction of the botanical pest, St John’s Wort, be made a State matter, and that immediate steps be taken to destroy the pest, the cost to be borne by the State”.

“That formation of cooperative societies of all primary producers. Members to be producers from and of the land. The cooperative spirit between the
primary producer and the producer in the industrial field to be fostered. Cooperative distributing centres to be established throughout the world. Cooperative societies to handle from producer to consumer direct. The State Government to advance cooperation through the Rural Bank credit system. Portion of the Friendly Societies’ Act dealing with cooperation to be amended in such a manner as would give cooperative societies power to institute a system of banking within their own movement.”

“The creation of a Department of Assay. Prospecting parties to consist of practical miners under a qualified geologist, mineralogist, and assayer. Assistance to all working miners by the establishment of the industry on cooperative principles and the abolition of the present system of speculation.”

“Amendment to Mining Act. That all men using explosives to pass examinations, and hold certificates for use of same; and further, that all works where blasting operations etc., should be in the interests of human life be brought under the Mining Act of NSW, and that all men in charge, where men’s lives are in danger, such men to pass an examination and qualification for same.”

**Labor and the University**

“New Plank – That the Senate Act of the University be amended to provide for a Senate more representative of the people by the inclusion in such Senate of two members of the ALP, and that such members hold office for twelve months. The election of said representatives to be by secret ballot conducted by the ALP Conference.”

“New Plank – That a commission be appointed by the Government for the purpose of revising the education system at present in force in New South Wales.”

**Day 9, Tuesday, 13 June 1922**

**Closer Settlement**

On Tuesday, June 13, Mr Gibbons (Murrumbidgee Electoral Council) moved: “That in the opinion of this Conference the eastern portion of the Western lands of the State should be immediately resumed for the purpose of closer settlement, and that this decision be placed before the Minister for Lands by a deputation”. The motion was carried.

Mr Gibbons also moved the following motion: “That the betterment tax be applied to lands increased in value by the expenditure of Government money on new works such as railways and tramways. The proceeds of such tax to be applied to the loan indebtedness of the Railway and Tramway Department, thereby eventually making cheaper carriage rates possible.” The motion was carried on the voices.
A motion was carried that members of Parliament, together with six delegates from the Conference, should form a deputation to introduce the unemployed to the Ministers of the present Government, and point out the necessity of doing something for the thousands now out of work.

**Single Seats Favoured**

A motion moved by Mr Buckley – “That the proportional representation system be abolished and that the single electorate system be reverted to” – was carried by 77 votes to 35. Mr Buckley also moved “that Conference adopts the suggestions of Mr McGirr to do away with selection ballots and allow all candidates to go to the poll”, which was allowed to stand over.

**Ministers’ Charges and Counter-Charges**

The President (Mr J Power) made an interim report on behalf of the committee appointed by Conference to investigate the charges and counter-charges made by Ministers at previous sessions of the Conference. The committee had met three times, and had considered evidence submitted by Messrs Loughlin, Mutch and Lazzarini. Mr McGirr did not appear before the committee. He stated that he did not intend to make any statement or take part in any inquiry before a committee which contained two persons who were prejudiced against him. Mr McGirr’s statement was confirmed by letter, setting out that he objected to Messrs Lavelle and Magrath sitting on the committee on the ground that they were personal enemies.

After some discussion Mr Pinder moved a motion – “That the interim report be received, and the committee instructed to proceed with the inquiry and bring down a report to Conference as soon as possible.”

**Day 11, Thursday, 15 June 1922**

**Opposition to Two Members of Committee**

On June 15 there was a lengthy debate on the matter. An amendment was moved by Mr Stein: “That the Conference select two other members of the committee in the place of Messrs Lavelle and Magrath”.

Mr Magrath, in the course of a lengthy statement, denied that he was prejudiced against Mr McGirr. He knew of no reason for Mr McGirr’s hostility towards him. Members of the committee were not concerned about either side, but it did desire to get at the truth of the matter. Personally he did not care whether he was on the committee or not, but
he considered it unfair on the part of Mr McGirr to make such a statement without coming to Conference to back it up.

Mr Lavelle, MHR, also denied any bias towards Mr McGirr. He contended that as he had been elected by Conference to sit on the committee, he intended to remain there until he was displaced by the Conference. He thought the objection raised by Mr McGirr was a deliberate attempt to prevent Conference dealing with a report from the committee. Even if he had any personal feeling in the matter, he would not have allowed it to prejudice his position on the committee.

**Mr McGirr’s Right**

Mr Brown (Ryde) thought it was a pity that the whole business had ever come before Conference. As to Mr McGirr’s right to object, delegates had to remember that in any court a criminal had the right to challenge the jury. Any member of Parliament, whose charges were being investigated, surely had the same right. He favoured the whole question being referred to the disputes committee or a special committee appointed by the incoming Executive. He did not think the committee could bring in a report before the end of Conference.

Mr JP Dunn protested against the time of Conference being wasted. There was a lengthy agenda paper to be dealt with, and they should get on with that business. He favoured the amendment moved by Mr Brown, with the addendum: “That all Leagues, Unions and Labor newspapers be given a full report of the finding of the committee”. Mr Mostyn thought the right time to object to any members of the committee was when they were being elected. If the matter was side-tracked the rank and file outside would consider that dirty work had been done. The matter should not be cloaked. Delegates wanted to hear the result of the investigation.

**Conference Should Hear Mr McGirr**

Mr T Bartle suggested that Mr McGirr should be invited to attend Conference, state his objections to Messrs Lavelle and Magrath, and if Conference considered the objections valid two more delegates should be elected to the committee. He was not barracking for Mr McGirr, but held that he was entitled to raise any objection he had. Mr Roberts (Fed. Storemen and Packers) did not think there was anything to justify an alteration of the committee.

Mr Dalley (Municipal Employees) accused Mr Lavelle of bias against Mr McGirr. He also suggested that Mr Magrath, whom he claimed was a close friend of Mr Catts, was prejudiced against Mr McGirr. He hoped the Conference would select two other members of the committee. Mr Magrath, in a personal explanation, denied that he was a member of the
P and O organisation, while Mr Lavelle said that Mr Dalley’s accusation against him was unfounded. Mr O’Brien, MLA, thought that if the two delegates objected to did not resign of their own free will Conference should remove them. He also suggested that Mr Lavelle was biased against Mr McGirr. McGirr was the only Minister who had the courage to stand up to the Board of Trade and override any of his under-strappers in the departments when they conflict with the interests of the workers. Had Labor won the elections the other Ministers would have been falling over themselves in their praise for him. But now Labor was defeated they were turning on him like a pack of dingoes.

After Messrs Hutchison, Baddeley, O’Dea, Rogan and Bramston had spoken, the motion was carried. The various amendments were defeated on the voices.

**Preselection Ballots**

The debate was resumed on a motion by the Lithgow League: “That Conference adopts the suggestion of Mr McGirr to do away with pre-selection ballots and allow all candidates to go to the polls”. Mr Ryan, speaking to the motion, claimed that if all the candidates had gone to the poll at the last election Labor would have been in a better position. Under proportional representation it did not matter how many candidates went to the poll. The final choice would remain with the people. He said that seats had been lost at the last elections owing to the preselection ballots.

In answer to Mr C Last, the President (Mr Power) ruled that if the motion was carried it would operate at once in connection with all Federal, State and municipal elections. Mr McGarry moved an amendment: “That preselection ballots be abolished in all elections conducted under the proportional representation system”. If the single electorate system were brought into operation again the motion would result in Labor candidates cutting one another’s throats for the one seat. His amendment would prevent that being done. Under the present system the more candidates they had in the field the better, as each would bring a personal following to support the Labor cause.

**More Intrigue Possible**

Mr McTiernan, MLA, was opposed to the motion, but considered Mr McGarry’s amendment a good one. He asked them to think what would happen if the single seat system came into operation again if the motion was carried. They had to remember, too, that if preselection was abolished, there would be the same appeals to sectional interests, and the worst elements of sectarianism would be introduced. No matter how
many candidates ran under the present system, it would be impossible to split the ticket, if all voted solid for Labor.

Mr E Cross (Letter Carriers) was opposed to both motion and amendment. They would lead to intrigue, and open the way to opportunists. He was willing for all candidates having an ‘open go’, but not that there should be no restriction on the number of candidates running.

Would Affect Organisation

Mr T Arthur thought that such a resolution, if carried, would tend to undermine the organisation. The elections cost money to run, and the funds had to come from the Leagues and Unions. If there was an ‘open go’ for all, there would be no need for Unions to contribute under Rule 6. They could come in under Rule 18, and the Movement would lose thousands of pounds.

Mr W O’Brien, MLA, also opposed both motion and amendment. The proportional system allowed parties to spring up and defeat Labor. The motion and amendment would make it confusion worse confounded. Wealthy men in the Movement would have a bigger “pull” over the electors than men without wealth. It was playing into the hands of wealth and privilege.

Mr J Grant claimed that the preselection ballots caused much trouble in the Movement. The Executive would be well advised to ascertain the number of candidates who could get elected, and only endorse that number. It was suicidal to endorse more men than the number of possible vacancies. He was against the principle of seeking out one man and giving him the No.1 vote. He was not going to sit down under the “outrage” perpetration in the Conference the other night in connection with the Senate ballot. Each man selected should be given an equal area in each electorate.

Faults of Preselection

Mr J Lynch (AWU) submitted a further amendment: “That all Labor candidates duly qualified be allowed to contest all future State elections, without preselection, while the present system of voting pertains”. He had seen enough under preselection in the past to condemn it. Candidates who went out vilifying one another should be put out of the Movement.

The Acting-President (Mr G Buckland) suggested that the amendments should be coordinated, and moved in the terms of the last amendment. This was agreed to. The next speaker (Mr J White) then moved an addendum to this amendment: “Providing each candidate’s nomination paper is signed by 100 members of Leagues or affiliated
Unions”. He held that the people should decide who was to be their member in Parliament. Seats were lost to Labor because candidates were foisted on to the electors to whom the electors were opposed. Mr O’Dea hoped that Conference would stand by the preselection ballots.

Why Decent Men Won’t Nominate

Mr RJ Stuart-Robertson, MLA, (Balmain), moved a further amendment: “Should proportional representation be retained by the ALP, Branches in each quota area of the electorate should elect its own candidate”. Mr W Colbourne suggested that both motion and amendment should be turned down. Mr M Swiney favoured preselection ballots. If individuals were placed higher than the Movement dry-rot would set in. Mr M Burke supported the amendment moved by Mr White. It would ensure that only genuine Laborites would be selected as candidates. The present system of selection was bad and sooner or later the Movement would be up against it. Honest people were refusing to offer themselves for selection because the method of selection was putrid.

Mr AE O’Brien moved a further amendment: “That suggestions be invited from members of the Movement for a better method of selection, and the Executive prepare a report on the matter for submission to the next Conference.”

At this stage a count of delegates was taken, and as there were not 100 present the Acting-President said it would be quite futile to continue the debate. A vote on the adjournment showed that 100 delegates had voted, at which there was an uproar. In the babel of voices that ensued, the Acting-president left the chair, and Conference adjourned.

Day 13, Saturday, 17 June 1922

Late Shopping Night

Conference met again on Saturday afternoon at 2.30 pm. Mr E O’Dea (Shop Assistants) secured the suspension of the standing orders, and moved the following motion, which was carried unanimously: “That the Early Closing Act be amended and made to apply to the whole State, the abolition of late shopping night, and with hours fixed as from 9 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday, and noon on Saturday”.

Another motion authorising the printing of new rule books with all alterations or additions made up to date was also carried.

Disorder prevailed when Mr AW Buckley demanded that the debate be resumed on the question of abolishing preselection ballots, which was brought to an abrupt conclusion on the previous night. The Acting-
Chairman (Mr Buckland) said that the business had lapsed the previous night and could not be further debated. Mr Buckley disagreed with this, and moved dissent. The motion of dissent from the Chairman’s ruling was carried, and Conference was in an uproar. Some delegates claimed that there were not 100 delegates present; others demanded a count. Several counts took place, finally establishing the fact that there were at least 100 delegates present.

Conference in an Uproar

While the confusion was at its highest, Mr C Last moved: “That the Conference adjourn sine die”. A wild scene followed, and after some difficulty a vote taken showed that the motion was defeated. Loud cheers greeted the announcement. The debate was then resumed on the question of preselection ballots. The Conference hall commenced to thin out. Finally the amendment moved by Mr J White, “That all Labor candidates duly qualified be allowed to contest all future State elections, without preselection, while the present voting system pertains, and that it should be necessary for such candidate to obtain not less than 100 signatures to his nomination of bona fide members of Labor Leagues or affiliated Unions”, was carried. However, as only 88 delegates voted the Chairman ruled that the motion was not constitutionally carried. Uproar again prevailed, and in the excitement the Chairman adjourned the Conference till 7 pm.

The Ryan v “Mercury” Lawsuit

Conference resumed at 8 pm, with the President (Mr J Power) in the chair. Mr Dalley moved the following motion, which was carried: “That congratulations be sent to Mrs TJ Ryan, widow of the late TJ Ryan, on the success of her lawsuit against the Hobart Mercury, and her persistence in clearing up the stigma on her late husband’s name”.

Mr Buckley again sought to have the question of preselection ballots brought before the Conference. The President ruled that it could not be done. Mr Buckley moved dissent. The president said he had no power to move dissent. Finally the matter was cut short by a delegate moving that Mr Buckley be no longer heard.

Caucus Secrecy Attacked

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA (Balmain), moved: “That a complete record be kept of Caucus meetings and division lists on policy matters, so that a report could be furnished at each annual Conference.” He claimed that there should be no secrets in the Movement. Caucus at present was a kind of Star Chamber. Some matters did leak out of the Caucus room, but
were often distorted. If a correct record were kept it would prevent distortion.

Mr Brotherson (Federated Storemen and Packers) seconded the motion, and said that it was necessary if only to put an end to the rumours flying round concerning Ministers and members of the party. They wanted honest men in Parliament, and this motion would help them.

Mr McTiernan, MLA, opposed the motion. The Caucus was a deliberative body, and any proposal submitted to Caucus not in accordance with the principles of Labor would be out of order, and Caucus would have no jurisdiction to deal with it. Caucus was an assembly of members meeting to analyse matters to mould them into the most effective shape for submission to the House. A man’s loyalty did not consist of what he said in Caucus, where there were always differences of opinion as to methods, but in how he kept his pledge on the floor of the House. What a member did in Caucus was no criterion at all. It was introducing a dangerous precedent, and it would be the easiest thing in the world for people who were supposed to be faithless to evade this new rule. It would mean that informal meetings would be held to decide what would be done in Caucus.

**Time for Open Diplomacy**

Mr T Arthur wanted the motion altered to include the Central Executive, while Mr JP Dunn moved a further addition, “That all Caucus meetings be attended by an Executive officer”.

Mr H Brown (Ryde) thought it was time they got down to open diplomacy, while Mr T Mutch, MLA, proposed that all representative Labor bodies should keep a record of all divisions arrived at. Mr Mutch was suggesting that some action should be taken against the secret intriguers who came into the Conference, but did not open their mouths, when the debate was cut short by the President announcing that he proposed to make a statement regarding the charges and counter-charges of Labor ex-Ministers.

**Investigating Committee’s Report**

The Committee’s report was of an inconclusive nature. It did not sustain any of the charges made by Mr McGirr, yet on the other hand it maintained that Mr McGirr may have had reasonable grounds for the assumption of his doubts. An application for a copy of the Committee’s report was refused. No report was issued to *The Worker* for publication.

In moving the adoption of the report, the President (Mr Power) said this was a time for burying the hatchet for ever, and every attempt should be made to prevent a repetition of this business in the future. It was a pity that when the matter first started action had not been taken by
the Parliamentary Party to stop it. He hoped that such action would be taken in the future if the occasion arose.

Mr O’Dea moved that the question be put. This was the signal for an uproar which lasted some time. Eventually the motion to put the question was defeated. Disorder prevailed as speakers for and against the report attempted to make themselves heard. Mrs Dwyer wanted to know who was responsible for reducing the women’s basic wage. It was reduced on December 21, two days after Mr Kavanagh assumed office as Minister for Labor and Industry.

Adoption Opposed

Mr Hutchison, who was one of the members of the inquiring committee, explained at some length the various points of the report. He, too, thought that the Parliamentary Party should have settled the quarrel before the elections took place. Mrs Bailey opposed the adoption of the report on the ground that it was too much like “a Scotch explanation”. There was nothing to convince her that the hatchet would be buried. Some Ministers could not say anything dirty enough against their colleagues. She contended that the ‘Majority Labor Party’, led by Catts, was behind a lot of the dirty work. She moved an amendment that it be referred to the incoming Executive for further consideration.

Mr W Colbourne claimed that the 15 members of the party who voted to send the basic wage report back to the Board of Trade were opposed to the £4/5/- rate. He wanted to know why the report did not disclose the names of those men so that delegates could see who they were. He also wanted to know why ten men had been absent from the Caucus room when the decision was made.

Was McGirr “Crucified”?

Mr T Arthur wanted to know why the Committee didn’t look into the reason why McGirr was put in charge of the Department of Labor and Industry - a department that he knew nothing about. He contended that the other Ministers were aware of the Statistician’s cost of living figures and desired to bring odium on McGirr’s head as Minister. The fact that Mr McGirr was the only Minister preventing the basic wage declaration being put into operation showed where other Ministers stood in the matter. Every one of them should have been standing solidly behind McGirr.

Mr V Molesworth, MLA, said that in voting to send the declaration back to the Board of Trade for review, members contended that if it was computed by the same method as in the previous year the wage would have been £4/6/4. It was to try and get it computed by the usual method that he and fourteen others voted to send it back.
Mr E Clear, in a long speech, deprecated the time of Conference being wasted on such a matter. It was an insult to country members.

**Conference Adjourns**

Mr Gallagher (Tramway Union) wanted to know who was responsible for going behind Mr McGirr’s back in getting the basic wage declaration to the Government printer, also who was responsible for allowing an officer of the Board of Trade to appear in the Industrial Court to certify that the Board had made a lower wage declaration. Those things were not mentioned in the report.

Mr Dalley contended that the fact that some members of the Parliamentary Party were against Parliament fixing the basic wage justified Mr McGirr’s charges.

Miss O’Sullivan said the report was too incomplete for Conference to adopt. There should be a further inquiry.

Finally, amid uproar, the amendment was carried, and Conference adjourned *sine die*.

Several matters dealt with at Conference appear under different headings in other parts of the paper.

**Ex-Premier Dooley at Conference**

Mr J Dooley, MLA, ex-Premier and leader of the NSW State Parliamentary Labor Party, put in an appearance before NSW Labor Conference on June 14, and was given a splendid reception by delegates.

Mr Dooley, in the course of a lengthy address, dealt with Labor’s defeat in the recent elections. He said he could not discover any action on his part that could be construed as a cause for Labor’s defeat. The Government faced a set of circumstances unparalleled in the history of the political life of the State. Labor appealed to the people with one of the best programmes ever submitted, yet it was turned down. It was true that there were many influences at work outside the Party ranks, but when they remembered the position within the Movement the cause of defeat was not far to seek.

The ex-Premier scathingly attacked members of the IWW who, though released by the Labor Government under Mr Storey, immediately turned round and assailed the Labor Movement. That was poor gratitude. The Government had also introduced the 44-hour week, believing it to be the logical interpretation of what eight hours really meant, yet a big section of the workers who benefited from this humane legislation immediately turned against Labor when the ‘Nationalists’ raised the sectarian issue.
Willing to Retire any Time

Mr Dooley stressed the need for honesty, straightforwardness, and consciousness on the part of all members of the Movement. If candidates for Parliament lived up to those qualifications there would be nothing to fear. One thing that Labor could say was that no member of the recent Government could be accused of having pecuniarily benefited himself, or of ever having trafficked in the great Labor cause. Referring to his own position as leader, Mr Dooley added that he was prepared to retire from his position at any time should the Movement consider another leader should be appointed, and loyally follow the man selected as leader by the Movement.