CHAPTER 12
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference,
30 - 31 March 1934

Report in The Sydney Morning Herald

This Conference had been preceded by an interstate conference between the Federal Executive and the representatives of the Lang party (from Victoria and South Australia as well as NSW). The objective was to restore unity between the Federal ALP and Lang’s State Labor. It was a complete failure, due to the lack of negotiating good will on both sides. Considering the bitterness still permeating both parties after the decision of the Lang party to destroy the Scullin Labor Government, that was not surprising. Lang was still convinced that he could supplant the Federal ALP by creating a federation of State branches loyal to the principles of Langism.

At this Conference recriminations for the failure of negotiations were a major feature. The official line was explained by Lang himself: “After a number of preliminaries, this conference informed the Labour movement of New South Wales it had resolved, by a majority decision, that, if the New South Wales Labour movement would guarantee to restore certain jobs to personal friends of members of the conference composing the majority, it would allow the Labour movement of New South Wales to assume the title of Federal Labour party and so achieve unity”. For the Inner Group this was unacceptable, or so they claimed, because various members of the Federal Party (such as EG Theodore) had been expelled by the ‘rank and file’ of State Conference, and only State Conference could give such a guarantee. The spokesman for Federal Labor, Mr Coleman, pointed out that even if the Lang party had accepted this demand the Inner Group’s control over preselections would have rendered it meaningless, and that Jock Garden had led the NSW delegation with the purpose of dictating impossible terms to the Federal Party.

One of the local issues discussed by the Executive and Conference was the decision of Albert Willis, formerly Lang’s strongest ally, to contest a by-election for the seat of Bulli in June 1933. He was refused Labor
endorsement and stood against an official State Labor candidate. Willis was unsuccessful, but he received strong support from a number of members of the Socialisation Units who were expelled from the party along with Willis. In some ways this signalled the end of Lang, since it convinced many on the left of the party that there was little point in fighting the Inner Group within the party. Lang had already lost much of the party’s industrial right, especially the AWU, which was one of the pillars of the Federal Labor Party. Lang still had strong support in local safe Labor electorates, but that was never going to be sufficient to win an election.

Later in the year, in the Federal elections of September, Jock Garden won a seat as a Lang Labor candidate for the seat of Cook. This was effectively the end of his involvement with the Inner Group; the view from Canberra was very different to that from Macquarie Street. So, in 1934 Lang lost the support of both Willis and Garden, who had been his principal political enforcers up till then.

Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1933-34

As in 1932 the conference was preceded by drawn-out meetings with the Federal ALP to achieve some unity with the Lang party, and a printed copy of the Executive Report does not seem to have survived. Most likely the Report was presented to the conference either in roneoed form or simply as a verbal report from the Secretary. There is a brief mention of some content in the Herald report of Conference discussion on the first morning. (See below) The Canberra Times has a similarly brief mention of the Executive Report.

Report in Canberra Times, 31 March 1934, p. 11.

Annual Report

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The report referred to “the campaign of disruption” last year. It pointed out that the campaign culminated in a serious division of opinion, resulting in members being divided on the question of selecting a candidate to contest the Bulli seat. “Our organisation”, the report continued, “on this occasion successfully withstood one of the greatest attacks made upon its solidarity since the conscription issue of 1916-17, and
resulted in the vindication of the attitude adopted by your leader and executive officers in their determination to give effect to the rules of the party in connection with the selection of a candidate for this electorate.”

Mr CH Matthews (vice-president) foreshadowed a motion to lift immediately the expulsions imposed on certain supporters of Mr AC Willis in the Bulli by-election. He said he did not believe in a heresy hunt.

A delegate: “You are beginning to see the light”.

The report was adopted.

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Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1934

(The Sydney Morning Herald, 31 March, 2 April 1934)

Day 1, Friday, 30 March


About 130 delegates attended the annual Easter conference of the Lang Labour party, which opened at the Trades Hall yesterday morning. For the first time since the Garden-Graves group assumed control of the Labour movement in 1927 the public was excluded from the conference.

The president (Mr PJ Keller) predicted that, as Mr Lyons had announced that there would be no wheat bounty, the Country party would attempt to force a Federal election on the eve of the harvest in September.

Mr Lang, addressing the conference, said that the Labour party’s plan of national reconstruction was the only hope of the youth of Australia. The plan provided for the social control of credit facilities, the regulation of the banking system, stabilisation of markets, reduction of interest, nationalisation of capital indebtedness, reduced hours and increased wages.

The conference rejected the proposals of the Federal Labour party for the restoration of unity in the Labour movement, and decided that the terms suggested by the Victorian Labour conference should be the only basis for unity.

It was also decided to lift expulsions imposed in connection with the Bulli by-election, providing the ex-members had not joined any other political party in the meantime. This decision excludes Mr AC Willis from membership in the Lang party.
The Conference

After committees had been elected, the president addressed the delegates. He said that this was the last occasion probably on which the delegates would meet in conference before a Federal election. Every delegate who had been watching the political situation knew that the Country party dared not postpone the elections until after the next harvest. The Prime Minister, at the Show banquet the other day, definitely told the wheat farmers that there would be no wheat bounty next year, so for this reason alone it was obvious that the Country party, which virtually held the balance of power, would cause an election on the eve of the harvest in September. If the Labour party lost the next Federal elections the chances were that it would never get another opportunity to elect a representative Government. They had seen what had happened in other parts of the world, and none of them wanted to see in Australia “the crucifixion of democracy” that had been witnessed in Germany, Austria and other countries.

The principal question before the movement was the need for unity. The time was short, yet the work of consolidation was essential if the movement was to undertake the big job ahead of it.

Mr Keller concluding expressed the hope that the delegates would not allow the conference to develop into a ’Donnybrook’, to enable the capitalist Press to discredit the gathering.

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The report was adopted.
Bulli Expulsions

Mr CH Matthews then moved the following motion – “That this conference, which endorses the action of the executive in disciplining ex-members of the party because of their activity at the Bulli by-election, is of opinion that those who were expelled but who have not joined any other political party, should be treated with clemency and that the executives be therefore directed to arrange for the immediate readmission with full continuity of those ex-members who are covered by the foregoing.”

Mr Byrne (Auburn): Who is this sugar coated pill designed to affect?

Mr Matthews continuing said that the expelled men had served their sentence and had learnt their lesson.

Mrs Crofts (South Coast) seconded the motion.

Mr Byrne (Auburn) opposed the motion. No names had been submitted for readmission, he said. The motion was designed to pull wool over their eyes. It was designed to allow certain men back who should have known better.

Mr Lawson (Tramways) moved an amendment that those members disciplined by the executive for supporting Mr Willis in Bulli should be asked to submit their names to the conference for readmission by noon the following day. There are some I would not readmit, said Mr Lawson. I am against some of them getting full continuity. We must discipline some of them.

There was an uproarious scene when Mr W McNamara (Neutral Bay) submitted a further amendment that the executive should be instructed to readmit those other members who had joined the Federal Labour party if their exclusion should prove a bar to the future unity negotiations.

A delegate: This is not a circus.

Mr McNamara said he did not wish to see unity negotiations wrecked because of the refusal of the conference to go further than the motion.

Mr Matthews speaking in reply said that the disputes committee would be prepared to recommend the readmission of such former members as Messrs W Maddocks (Annandale), WJ Murray, J Kilburn (Bricklayers), J Frame (Dulwich Hill), Thomas (Hurlstone Park), JB Sweeney (University Labour Club), and H Melrose (Barton).

Mr A Rutherford (Hospital Employees) said that the conference should provide reasonable access to men who had made mistakes in the past. Both amendments were defeated, and Mr Matthews’s motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

Relief Workers

Mr F Kelly (Storemen and Packers) secured the suspension of the standing orders to move for the appointment of a committee of two
delegates from the conference, two from the Parliamentary Labour party, and two from the Labour Council to prepare a case to place before the public concerning the conditions under which dole workers live and work.

Mr Kelly said that in the Matraville district there were 1000 families on the starvation line.

Mr Dalton (Canterbury) said that dole workers had been thrown on to the industrial scrapheap. The unions had dumped them.

One delegate suggested that while the rank and file of the Labour movement were assisting the unemployed, Labour Parliamentarians had done nothing.

Mr J Stewart (Electrical trades) said that unions had provided £50,000 among the unemployed. It was not the duty of the unions but of the Government to assist the unemployed. The position of the dole workers was a disgrace to civilisation.

The resolution was carried unanimously. Messrs Kelly and Dalton were elected members of the committee to represent the ALP.

At this stage the leader of the Opposition (Mr Lang) entered the hall and was given a rousing reception.

**Resolutions**

Mr Packwood (Tramways) moved the first motion on the agenda paper which urged that the next Labour Government should take immediate steps to investigate conditions at the Sydney Industrial Blind Institution as a preliminary to the complete nationalisation of the Institution and similar institutions.

The motion was carried.

The conference carried a motion that the Early Closing Act should be amended to make provision for the finishing and closing time from Mondays to Fridays (inclusive) to be 5.30 pm and 12 noon on Saturdays.

Mr Byrne (Auburn) alleged that one member of the printing industry had worked 50 hours overtime.

Mr Holden (Bathurst) moved that it should be an instruction to the next Labour Government to restore immediately the awards applicable to the rural industries with the basic wage as the minimum rate to be paid. The motion was carried.

Mr Nicholson (Miners) moved that membership of unions should be compulsory and that all labour should be engaged through a union office.

Mr Holden (Bathurst) asserted that if this was done city unionists would secure preferential treatment over country unionists. He moved as an amendment that labour should be engaged through a labour bureau.
Alderman Garden said that all unions were opposed to the labour exchange, because it threatened their existence. He suggested that all labour should be engaged through the local union office.

“It would be impracticable to apply the motion in country districts”, said a delegate representing the theatrical employees.

The motion was carried.

Mr Hayes (Leichhardt) moved to increase the payments of old-age pensions to within 50 per cent of the Federal basic wage, or an adequate sustenance, and to make old-age pensions payable to both men and women at 60 years of age.

Nurse Francis moved as an amendment that women aged 55 years and men aged 60 years should be eligible for the old-age pension. The amendment was carried.

**Mr Lang’s Address**

Mr Keller, in introducing Mr Lang, said that the metropolitan Press would feature that Mr Lang dominated the conference. If they were fair they would say that Mr Lang still retained the confidence of the Labour movement. Once the Press commenced to pay compliments to Labour leaders the delegates could believe that those leaders were slipping.

“When I was a boy aged five I was compelled to read the papers to my father, stricken on a sick bed”, said Mr Lang, “I had to read the leading articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. What the *Herald* said then is it is saying now. Because of that, old Labour leaders say, ‘Read the *Herald*’. Whatever they say do the opposite. (Laughter.) It is because of their unfairness, their bitterness, and their injustice that Labour, right down the years, has made enormous sacrifices to obtain a vehicle for the expression of its views in a daily newspaper.

“It is probable that both a State and Federal election will be held before the next annual conference”, said Mr Lang, “Each of us fervently hopes that these elections will result in Labour Governments in both Federal and State Parliaments. Whether or not that hope is realised must depend largely upon the deliberations of this conference.

“Unity is a word that is being very much overworked by all political parties in the present situation. We will understand it better if we examine the existing political situation. Some weeks ago a conference of the Federal Labour party met in Sydney to discuss unity. There was much window-dressing and public posturing before this conference ultimately got down to the real issue.

“After a number of preliminaries, this conference informed the Labour movement of New South Wales it had resolved, by a majority decision, that, if the New South Wales Labour movement would guarantee to restore certain jobs to personal friends of members of the conference composing the majority, it would allow the Labour movement of
New South Wales to assume the title of Federal Labour party and so achieve unity. This done, the delegates who at great expense, had been brought from Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria, were allowed to return to their homes.

“Within the next month this Federal Conference proposes to again meet our delegates. We can go to that meeting determined to concede in the most generous terms, provided our democratic principles are not frittered away.

**Appeal to Youth**

“If, within a very short time, these people cannot see their way to make an agreement, then the Labour movement of this State must itself draft a platform and constitution under which hundreds and thousands of good Labour men and women in our sister States can combine their efforts in a nation-wide Labour movement”, Mr Lang said.

“This ever-widening generation of youth must be served. It is impatient of the old men sitting in control of the political parties - the old men manipulating the financial system. These old men, old in the sense that their ideas belong to a previous age more than that their years are many, are barring every door through which the youth of our country might hope to enter into full manhood. This new and neglected generation is the one which is forcing repeated and rapid changes in every country in the world.

“It will do the same in Australia if those who occupy positions of power and responsibility continue to ignore it. There was a time when the young people turned naturally to the Labour party as soon as they became of age. It was the party that, with courage and vigour, fought privilege and tradition and made the opportunity that enabled the rising generations to enter into their heritage. Unfortunately, there is a feeling abroad today that the Labour movement is no longer the instrument of progress and advancement that it was, because it, too, has got into the hands of the old men. In New South Wales alone has Labour retained its virility, its ideals and its courage. The movement in this State is the only movement capable of becoming that instrument of progress which can make the opportunities which this rising generation demand. The financial system, which is the most powerful factor in the economic system, must be taken out of the hands of the old men if the young man is to be allowed to live. An ordered system of planned economy would give youths a chance where the present system of industrial anarchy condemns them to starvation. The men who grow the food we eat and the material to make the clothes we wear are not earning enough to feed and clothe themselves. Mothers who were haunted with the fear of their boys drifting into the dead end of unskilled work are now terror-stricken
at the prospect of their sons and daughters finishing in a dead-end of idleness and starvation.

**Lang Party’s Programme**

“We believe that we can plan that national reconstruction which is the only hope the Australian youth has of enjoying the heritage of his manhood”, said Mr Lang. “But everywhere the load is barred by the dead hands of the old men in control. They cannot think in the future they can only live in the past – and my friends the past is dead.”

“We must look to new methods, new ideas, new economic truths built on the bitter experience of this depression. In the policy of our movement the people can find what they are seeking – in the system of social control of the credit facilities of the nation, in the regulation of the banking system to meet the necessities of consumption as effectively as the needs of production; in the stabilisation of markets for primary products; in the removal of excessive interest burdens and the nationalisation of capital; indebtedness in the expansion of commodity purchasing power to a reduced working week and increased wages; in short, in the planning for national economy to eliminate waste redundancy and private exploitation.

“These are the chief ingredients which when employed simultaneously will make for that national recovery that Australia so badly needs. Even now we should be out among the people explaining our proposals to them and when they are understood we will have such a following that no political party has had in Australia before. Instead of that we are marking time wasting valuable time waiting for the old men of the party to decide which allocation of lobs provider a formula for unity.

**“Mountain of debt”**

“Three years ago the Labour movement in New South Wales was the only one of all the political movements which recognised what it was that was causing all the trouble. In clear and unmistakable terms we pointed out that the mistakes of the old men and the weaknesses of a worn-out financial system had built up a mountain of debt which the generations of today could not carry, even if they wished to. We pointed out that there was not enough money in the world to pay the interest on this debt, let alone repay the principal. Then, we were a voice crying in the wilderness. We were not listened to; we were derided, abused, and scoffed at. But what a difference today.

“Week after week we read of clerics and Church dignitaries condemning the financial system and pleading for relief from indebtedness for their people. Nation after nation has admitted the truth of our attitude by refusing to meet their indebtedness on the ground of their inability to
pay. Farmers’ organisations, home-buyers’ organisations, and similar gatherings are demanding a writing-down of indebtedness. In every section of the community you will find an overwhelming endorsement of the analysis of the position which we made three years ago. This general recognition of the correctness of our attitude then will make the public more receptive of our message now.

“Our work no longer lies in the conference room, we must get out among the people. It is preferable that that work be done within the existing interstate organisation, but if the vested interests of the old men continue to obstruct the path of progress, then we must carry the torch to the people themselves. The Labour movement has not lost its virility, it has not lost its courage, nor has it lost its ability to pioneer the path of progress.

“Young Australia is calling for its opportunity to live, and the Labour movement of this State is determined to see that that opportunity is granted.

“This is your duty”, said Mr Lang, referring to his proposed nationwide Labour movement. “This is what you must do. Don’t humbug. Don’t dilly dally. Take the fight on.” (Cheers.)

“Your Poor Servant”

“What did the Labour movement in other States say about your poor servant?” asked Mr Lang, referring to his criticism of the financial system three years ago. “What did the newspapers say about me? They treated us as voices crying in the wilderness. They thought I would weaken if they emptied the bucket on me.” (Laughter.)

Mr Lang said that it was preferable to carry out their plans through the existing Federal organisation. If the Federal officials said ‘no’, they would do it in their own way.

Unity Debate

The president, amidst laughter, read a letter from the secretary of the Federal Labour party (Mr DL McNamara, MLC), setting out proposals for the restoration of unity in the Labour party. The proposals provided for the recognition of the Federal authority of the party, consideration of all expulsions, an equitable basis for merging the existing Federal ALP organisation with the State body, the conserving of the rights of all persons, and the appointment of a committee to draft proposals for another unity conference.

Mr A McNamara, MLC, moved the principal motion, embodying the Lang party’s proposals for unity. The resolution provided, among other things, for the establishment of a Federal secretariat, to replace the existing Federal ALP executive. After detailing the Lang party’s scheme, details of which have already been published, the resolution continued:
“Conference further declares its readiness to rejoin the Federal Labour party, and its willingness to grant full continuity of membership to all those persons automatically expelled for the part they took in the 1931 Federal elections, and in this event, conference declares that it is prepared to sanction the reopening of all ballots for Federal selection in New South Wales, to enable readmitted members to nominate for selection should they desire to do so.

“In the event that it is not possible within one month to secure a general agreement to unity on the basis already indicated, the central executive is instructed to convene an all-Australian conference, comprising all State organisations for the express purpose of determining a Federal constitution, organised upon the basis of the Victorian-New South Wales basis, on which a unified Federal party shall be established to give expression to the views and aspirations of the rank and file of the Labour movement in every State of the Commonwealth.”

Mr JB Martin, MLC, in a report on his recent visit to South Australia, and the negotiations between the Lang party and the Federal ALP officials, said that the Victorian Labour conference had endorsed the proposals contained in Mr A McNamara’s motion, notwithstanding the opposition of Mr Scullin. Mr Martin claimed that at the recent interstate conference Mr Scullin was responsible for the rejection of the Victorian Labour party’s proposals. Referring to his visit to South Australia, Mr Martin said he was astounded at the enthusiasm displayed. Union secretaries had decided that unless the Federal Labour party agreed to the Lang party’s proposals they would support the Lang party in South Australia. Victorian Labour members intended to call upon Mr Scullin to explain why he opposed the decisions of the Victorian Labour Conference.

Alderman JS Garden asserted that the wharf-labourers at Port Adelaide had unanimously endorsed the Lang party’s proposals. Amidst cheers, Alderman Garden said that the rank and file in South Australia were united behind “the greatest man Australia ever produced – JT Lang”.

There was considerable amusement when Mr Kilmartin (Randwick) said that “If there were 50 Ted Rileys, Jock Garden would still win Cook, even if I have to do all the voting myself”.

Mr A McNamara, replying to criticism of the motion, said that Mr J Coates, MLC, and Mr PE Coleman would not be readmitted in the event of unity being achieved.

The motion embodying the Lang party’s proposals for Labour unity was carried by an overwhelming majority.

**Election of Officers**

Mr P Keller was re-elected president unopposed for 12 months, and Mr JJ Graves, MLC, general secretary for three years. The following three
nominations were received for the positions of two vice-presidents: Messrs E Boland, T Sheehan, and T Lannan. A ballot will be held today.

Mr Beasley’s Speech

Mr Beasley, MP, said that some of Mr Scullin’s supporters were more Tory than the present Government. He said that an autocracy had been set up by the Federal ALP, and claimed that if he and his supporters were in a position some time ago to embark on the interstate campaign now in progress they would have beaten delegates to the recent Federal Conference to their knees. “From this day onward the fight is on in every other State”, said Mr Beasley amidst applause.

The conference carried a motion protesting against the alleged withdrawal of pensions to 29 widows at Broken Hill.

At 10:30 pm the conference adjourned until 10 am today.

Day 2, Saturday, 31 March 1934


Sweeping changes in the policy of the Lang Labour party were embodied in reports on tariffs and the basic wage adopted by the Easter conference of the party at the week-end.

The recommendations will form the basis of the policy of the Lang party at the next Federal elections.

The decisions of the conference with regard to the tariff include an elaborate scheme designed so to control industry that, in the event of the decisions being embodied in legislation, manufacturers would be compelled to submit to the constant supervision of the books and accounts by Government auditors, to a fixed quota of employees in proportion to turnover, and to regulate the amount of capital to be employed in every manufacturing concern.

The Conference

The tariff proposals provide for the compulsory signing of a Labour convention by concerns benefiting by the tariff, the convention to provide for:

(1) A fixed quota of employees in proportion to gross turnover;

(2) automatic variation of the percentage of protection in proportion to the variation of the base rates of wages in the industry;
(3) heavy automatic cash forfeits for every conviction for any breach of legal labour obligations;
(4) automatic suspension of tariff protection during the currency of an illegal lock-out in the industry, whether general or local;
(5) the Federal registration of every manufacturing concern, and a review of the capitalisation of each and the economic employment of such capital;
(6) the compulsory liquidation of surplus and ‘watered’ capital where the dividend requirements of such are a factor in uneconomic production;
(7) the fixation of a statutory limit of reserves of such concerns, and the compulsory application of surplus reserves for the purpose of reducing production costs;
(8) regular inspection by Government auditors of all books and accounts, including wages sheets, all production costs, disbursements, and net profits, dividends, and reserves.

The report also recommended regional tariffs, protected shipping, an inheritance tax, reserve profits tax, and an anti-trust tax.

The report on the tariff was submitted by Mr GE Gibson, who said that it had been drafted by a special committee, and had already been adopted by the Lang party executive.

**The Basic Wage**

Alderman JS Garden submitted the report on the basic wage, which also contains many drastic proposals. These provide for a complete revision of the basic wage, a stabilised minimum wage, the regulation of prices, a planned national economy, an extension of social insurance to cover unemployment, health, accident, maternity, marriage, child endowment, old age, and death, and adequate representation for employees upon anybody dealing with wages, hours, and prices.

The report submitted by Alderman Garden was carried, and the conference also endorsed the principle of a 30-hour week.

**Anti-War Declaration**

Delegates approved what was described as “an anti-war declaration”. Mr W Burnett presented the declaration to the conference. It declared that the Labour party was opposed to “capitalist and Imperialist” wars, and suggested that leagues and unions should send a copy of the declaration to the Federal and State Parliaments.

“The executive supports the principle of armed resistance to foreign invasion”, the report read. “It is of the opinion that an efficient and well-equipped army is necessary for self-defence”.

419
The declaration set out that a happy and contented people constituted a first necessity to an effective defence scheme, and consequently recommended the restoration of real wage levels and pension rates, the development, as a nationised industry, of the distillation of petrol and oil from shale and the hydrogenation of coal, manufacture of weapons of war to be carried out solely by the Government, the elimination of professional soldiers. It was urged that the defence force should be placed on an honorary basis.

Mr Spooner Criticised

When the conference was resumed at the Trades Hall on Saturday morning the suspension of standing orders was granted to discuss the action of the Minister for Local Government (Mr Spooner) in appointing an administrator to conduct the business of the Bankstown Municipal Council. Mr Spooner was criticised also for appointing a Mayor at Waverley and an engineer at Katoomba, and for having allegedly interfered with the affairs of the Manly Municipal Council.

Mr Amour (Bankstown), in moving the motion protesting against the action of Mr Spooner, described him as “the Fascist dictator of the State”.

Mr J Donovan seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr A Balkin (Tramways) moved a motion that any non-member of the party opposing an endorsed Labour candidate should be ineligible to join any branch for four years. The motion was carried.

An amendment of the rules was proposed, to make it obligatory for municipal or Parliamentary candidates to be financial members of both an ALP branch and a bona fide trade union for three years before the date of nomination.

“If you carry the resolution you disfranchise half the members of the ALP”, said Mr Lawson (Tramways). “The proposal is an unjust one”.

The motion was rejected on the voices.

The conference approved a number of alterations to the rules recommended by the Lang executive. Mr CH Matthews (vice-president) said that the alterations were designed to facilitate the application of the rules. They would not interfere with the rights of the rank and file.

The conference decided to insist on the observance of the local government rules, making it obligatory on Labour aldermen to satisfy the responsible ALP official that they had supported the Labour candidate for any vacancy on the Water Board, Fire Board, or any other office.

Day Labour Principle

A long discussion took place on a motion from the metropolitan conference concerning Rule 9 of the Local Government rules which enforces day labour, with preference to unionists, in all municipal work. The rule
compels Labour municipal councils to adhere to the day labour principle, unless exemption is granted by the Lang executive in regard to contracts.

The motion sought to delete the clause in the rule giving the executive the right to grant exemptions.

“This contract system lends itself to graft”, said Alderman Whelan (Paddington), supporting the motion, which was rejected.

New Officials

Mr EM Boland was elected vice-president of the Lang Labour party. Mr Boland is a native of West Melbourne, and was educated at the Coburg High School. He is a pledged follower of Mr Lang, and a prominent member of the Lang executive. He is also president of the ALP younger set. Mr Boland is 32 years of age. Mr T Lennan (Forbes) was also elected a vice-president.

Surry Hills League

Mr A McNamara, MLC, on behalf of the appeals committee, reported on the faction fight in the Surry Hill branch. He said that charges of disruption had been made by the chairman of the league (Mr L Logue), against a prominent member of the league, Mr WL Webster. Mr McNamara said that the committee had sustained the charges, and recommended that the executive should proceed with the annual election of officers of the league for 1934, under the supervision of the general returning officer. Other recommendations were that Mrs Shiels and Messrs Webster, E Atkins, and J Albany should be censured for disruptive tactics, and that Messrs Logue and Webster should be debarred from holding any office in the organisation for 12 months.

In moving for the deletion of the section of the report debarring Messrs Webster and Logue from holding office in any league, Mr CH Matthews said that the Surry Hills branch had been ‘cleaned up’, and the members were now capable of dealing with the two members concerned. He agreed with the committee’s report, that Mr Webster had been responsible for disruption. “Why, our general secretary, Mr Graves, was unanimously re-elected general secretary yesterday by the rank and file, yet we find Mr Webster referring to him as “Jimmie Goo Gan”, and imputing suggestions concerning unemployment funds”, said Mr Matthews. “We all know Mr Graves had nothing to do with unemployment funds”.

Mr McNamara, in reply, heatedly attacked Alderman Garden, who had supported Mr Matthews’s amendment. “Alderman Garden has attempted to place evidence before this conference in support of Mr Webster”, he said. “Such evidence should have been placed before the appeals committee. This is no place for it.”
The amendment deleting the recommendation that Messrs Webster and Logue should be debarred from holding office for twelve months was carried by a narrow majority.

**Country Matters**

The conference discussed 11 notices of motion from the country provincial conference dealing with a number of subjects relating to rural subjects.

Mr K Hoad moved the first motion urging the creation of a Federal wheat pool, with one handling, marketing, and chartering authority. The motion was adopted.

Other recommendations of the country conference that were adopted, were:

"That the next Labour Government review the question of soil erosion, to adopt a more practical method of application."

"That the maximum interest chargeable against all primary producers, business men, traders, and home builders be 3 per cent."

"That travelling stock reserves and camping reserves adjacent to State highways be made available for settlement, and that suitable land be resumed on secondary roads for reserves before the cancellation of the present reserves."

"That the Pastures Protection Boards be abolished within six months of the formation, of the next Labour Government, with an exemption from the stock tax in respect to all holdings up to a living area in extent."

"That banking be nationalised and credits socialised, and that a land and agricultural development committee be set up to have the power to acquire compulsorily, on just terms, land holdings for subdivision."

"The consolidation of all Crown debts into one account to induce land improvements, funded arrears, etc., investigation of all State forests with a view to having those most suitable for land settlement made available, and an extension of the Minister’s powers enabling him to carry out the party’s policy in this regard."

"That the Crown Lands Act be amended to provide that, in cases of forfeiture where the value of the improvements exceeds the amount owing to the Crown, the balance be credited to the settler."

"That the next Labour Government commence immediately the extraction of oil, benzine, etc., from coal.”

**Unemployment**

Notices of motion were submitted to the conference relating to the unemployed. They urged that the socialisation of credit should be accomplished and that the next Federal Labour Government should institute a national unemployment insurance scheme.
The president (Mr Keller) ruled that the motions were already part of the policy of the party.

The conference approved the decisions of the unemployed labour workers’ conference providing for full work or sustenance for the unemployed, and instructed unions and leagues to give effect to the policy.

One woman delegate suggested that members should withhold one week’s rent to assist the unemployed.

Mr Holden (Bathurst) informed delegates that in his centre the unemployed were provided with bootmaking and hairdressing facilities and had a wireless set placed at their disposal.

**Tramway Employees**

It was alleged in a statement issued by tramway delegates that tramway employees were being politically persecuted because of the support they had given to Mr Lang.

A motion was moved demanding among other things the restoration of railway pass concessions and the recognition of the principle that service in the particular department broken or otherwise should be the only consideration in determining seniority.

The motion was carried.

**Poultry Industry**

The poultry farmer is in the worst position of all, said Mr A Finlay (Waterside Workers) when moving a motion for the creation of a Federal wheat and egg pool, the fixation of a standard of pollard and bran, and the control by some authority of poultry for human consumption. Mr Finlay alleged that the Sussex-street merchants were making tremendous profits. He said that there was no check on poultry sold for consumption and that diseased poultry had been sold for human consumption. The poultry farmers controlled 40,000 votes and the Labour party would need their support to win such seats as Auburn and Parramatta.

Alderman JS Garden said that the poultry farmer had always been behind the Labour party.

Mr Hoad: They could not have been at the last State election.

The motion was carried.

**A Lively Scene**

There was a lively scene during a discussion on a motion eventually rejected for the registration of chain store organisation. Mr Conway (Amalgamated Engineers) accused the chairman (Mr P Keller) of attempting to gag the debate.
Amidst the clanging of the conference bells, Mr Keller asked Mr Conway to resume his seat.

Mr Conway: I will not. You have ignored me.

Mr Keller: Resume your seat.

Mr Conway: I won’t. I will walk out.

Mr Keller: Well, walk out.

Mr Conway then left the room. Later in the session, however, he took his seat again.

**Miners’ Loan**

A heated discussion took place on a motion from the metropolitan conference that the matter of reimbursing the Miners’ Federation for money advanced in connection with the ballot box case should be referred to the executive who should be asked to refer it to the annual conference.

Mr Nicholson (Northern Miners) asked the secretary (Mr JJ Graves, MLC) whether steps had been taken to repay the debt which amounted to £3250.

Mr Graves said that most of the unions had contributed to the liquidation of the ballot box debt although some shirked their responsibility. Union secretaries gave two guineas, and union organisers 30/-.

The ALP was only partly responsible for the money. The miners’ contribution was by way of a loan, but the other unions made voluntary donations. He considered that the party was morally bound to pay the money but the present time was inopportune to do so. There was nothing in the ALP office with which to pay the debt. At the first available opportunity the debt would be repaid.

Alderman JS Garden said that the total amount collected from the unions was £2368. The expenses of the ALP in connection with the case amounted to £2000. The miners had received £750 in repayment of the debt. He was one of the seven union secretaries who had given a bond that the loan would be repaid. If the members desired to do so they could sue those secretaries. What they were morally bound to pay would be paid.

Mr Nicholson (Northern Miners) moved an amendment requesting the ALP to repay the debt at the rate of £100 a month. He said that for many years the Miners’ Federation had given much money to the Labour movement. It had sunk £40,000 in Mr Lang’s paper. If this money had not been so invested the paper probably would not have been in existence today.

Seconding the amendment Mr G Hindmarsh (Lithgow) said that if the money was repaid the Federation would be able to pay the strikers at Wonthaggi strike money each week. There were at present 15,000 unemployed members of the Federation.
An amendment was submitted by Mr Gard (Engineers) that a committee should be appointed, consisting of one representative each from the ALP and union guarantors to draw up a scheme.

Mr Anlezark (Miners) emphasised that the miners had not adopted a hostile attitude.

Mr Gard’s amendment was carried.

The conference carried a resolution urging the abolition of the Aborigines Protection Board, and demanding that full rights of citizenship should be granted to aborigines.

There was a lively interlude during consideration of a motion to give the Women’s Central Organising Committee the right to submit motions to the conference.

“We will do the same as the men do – go on strike”, said Nurse Francis. “We are not going to take a back seat any longer. We will run candidates against anyone who opposes us”.

Amidst protests from women delegates, the vote on the motion was declared to be in the negative. On a show of hands, the motion was later carried.

Parliamentarians Attacked

Mrs Crofts (South Coast) moved that the next Federal and State Labour Governments should compile a bill to compel Labour members of Parliament to resign if they changed their policy.

Mr Byrne (Auburn) seconded the motion.

Mr J Cahill opposed the motion “on the ground of common sense”. Amidst uproar, Mr Cahill declared that the 54 men had stood by Mr Lang because they were “not game to do otherwise”.

The motion was adopted.

Disputes

The conference adopted a report by the appeals committee that Labour aldermen should be required to observe the day labour clauses of the party’s platform, to obey decisions of the caucus, and to recognise the authority of municipal assemblies.

Mr F Roels (Bondi) was censured for bringing “unsustained charges” against Messrs Kay and March, of the Bondi branch.

Religious Freedom

“The position is being side-stepped by the ALP”, said Mr Ryan (Dubbo), supporting a motion that the following words should be added to the objective: ‘and to secure to the people complete political, religious, and cultural freedom in accordance with the ideals of the Australian people’.”
Mr Lawson (Tramways) said that the word religion should never be mentioned in the constitution; the party would be flogged by its political opponents.

“The introduction of religion into our objective will cause dissension in our ranks”, said Mr J Stewart (Electrical Trades).

Mr Cahill (Dubbo), who moved the motion, said that if it was not carried they would be accused of being opposed to religious freedom. Religious institutions were used by their political opponents to gull the people. The motion was carried.

Other Decisions

Other decisions of the conference included: That the executive should consult the unions and present a report to next conference concerning the inadequacy of the provisions of the Railway and Tramway Superannuation Act; that the action of the executive in establishing a fighting fund for the elections be endorsed; that members of affiliated unions within the railway and tramway departments who resigned to derive the benefits of the 44-hour week by becoming non-unionists, be excluded from the seniority lists; that the next Federal Labour Government abolish all fire brigade boards and set up a Commonwealth board to control the service.

It was also resolved: That all retired Public servants whose pensions amounted to more than the basic wage as laid down by the Labour party should forfeit their pensions if they accepted a paid position; that the next Labour Government should introduce legislation to prevent the sale or lease of any State or Federal owned concern until the proposed sale or lease was submitted to the people at a referendum; that old-age pensioners and unemployed persons should not be obliged to pay radio licence fees; that the next Labour Government should acquire and operate all bus services and provide for absolute preference of employment to members of bona fide land transport unions; that betting shops and totalisator agencies should be licensed in the principal centres of population situated more than 20 miles from Sydney.

At 10.15 pm the conference adjourned sine die.

Unity Proposals. Federal ALP’s Attitude. Statement by Mr Coleman.

Mr PE Coleman, president of the New South Wales branch of the Federal ALP, issued a statement last night concerning the decision of the Easter conference of the Lang Labour party to reject the proposals to bring about unity among the warring factions in the Labour movement.

Seeing how the unity proposals were misrepresented their rejection by the hand-picked Lang Easter Conference which is under the domination of
such former enemies of the Labour movement as Mr Garden is not surprising, said Mr Coleman. At the interstate conference Mr Garden as chief spokesman of the Lang delegation sought to dictate impossible terms like a conquering foe.

The interstate conference was in effect asked to sacrifice and repudiate those who had remained loyal to their party pledges and to the platform and rules of the Australian Labour Party and in conceding the whole of the Lang demands to forget the action of the Beasley group in voting out of office the Scullin Government and to overlook the manner in which Mr Garden had in the past played into the hands of Labour’s enemies.

In endorsing Mr Garden’s disruptive policy the Lang Easter Conference has rendered Labour unity impossible. It was stated that the interstate conference negotiation failed because immunity was sought for certain Federal Labour politicians. This is incorrect. The unity negotiations failed because Mr Garden and others wanted them to fail, because they are after the Federal Labour politicians’ jobs. It is they who put jobs before the unity of the Labour movement.

They very humorously offer to hold fresh selection ballots which they will control reserving the right to withhold endorsements from those who have incurred their displeasure. He would be a very foolish political fly who would walk into their parlour in view of the manner in which their ballots are conducted and the charges of corrupt and irregular practices which have been made and remain uninvestigated.

After all the Easter Conference decision is nothing more than that of a dominant clique which has a stranglehold on the Lang party that cannot be broken under the present rules. If the rank and file were allowed to hear both sides and pass judgment in a secret ballot there is little doubt that the interstate conference would be strongly supported. It is known that many union officials are opposed to the inner group control of the Lang party but are afraid to declare themselves publicly for fear of victimisation. The gesture to those who supported Mr Willis in the Bulli by-election is only made because the Lang party are becoming alarmed at the growing disintegration of their party.

Mr Garden and his disciples, in spreading their gospel of discord in the other State branches of the ALP, showed a characteristically reckless disregard for political facts. They referred to the treachery of electors who at the Federal elections used their own discretion in extending their preferences and disregarded the voting instructions which at that election was to give the Lang candidates the second preferences although at the State elections the extension of preferences was left open.

Lurking in the background Mr Lang fired shots at the interstate conference through his debenture controlled newspaper instead of coming forward to frankly discuss the position with the Labour leaders from other States. No doubt Mr Lang’s usually elastic conscience would
not permit him to confer with the representatives of a united Labour movement which he had done his best to destroy.

It is amusing to hear 58-year old Mr Lang asking of the need for youth in politics when during his term in office he recalled to active public service more than one superannuated septuagenarian public servant whilst he sought to except Mr Piddington from the judicial retiring age of 70 years. In the past few months he was responsible for selection by the executive (without local selection ballots) of two retired miners’ union officials both in their seventies for the Bulli and Hamilton seats. Were Mr Lang in furtherance of his new youth movement to retire like Cincinnatus to his farm at Ebenezer his action would do more to unify the Labour movement and restore confidence in it than any capricious and obstructive unity formula devised by him in collaboration with his friend Mr Garden. If he could persuade Mr Garden to retire with him it would further strengthen the position.

The New South Wales Federal ALP looks to the interstate conference and the Federal Parliamentary Labour party to take up the gauntlet so contumptuously thrown in their faces. Once the workers are made conversant with the facts they will recognise that the Garden-Graves domination spells disaster for Labour. We propose to ask the interstate committee to collaborate with us in preparing a State-wide campaign in New South Wales. We appeal now to all Labourites to rally behind the unity proposals of the interstate conference and to join in the rebuilding of a Labour movement in New South Wales based on the old ideals of Labour and unpolluted by either Fascism or Communism.