CHAPTER 14
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 10-11 April 1936

Report in The Sydney Morning Herald

At the NSW election in May 1935 Lang's State Labor had won only 29 of the 90 seats in the Legislative Assembly. It was clear that Labor would be in exile as long as the split between Federal and State Labor lasted. This led to genuine negotiations to heal the split, which are detailed in the Executive Report and approved by Conference. The issue hanging over from previous negotiations – the position of Mr Theodore – was left for a future Conference to decide in the event that Theodore applied for re-admission. By 1936, however, Theodore had abandoned politics and turned his attention to his business enterprises.

In the report on the summary two days of Conference there is very little mention of the other developing split in Lang's party involving the Socialisation Units. They had not gone away. A few months later, a Special Conference was convened in August to deal with a wave of expulsions that was designed to solve that problem. That Conference is the topic for the next chapter.

One significant decision was a resolution to disband the Women's Central Organising Committee that had been an important part of the ALP machinery since 1904. The Executive Report had praised the WCOC in unqualified terms, but the tone of discussion on the Conference floor was in marked contrast. One delegate suggested that the alternative to a central committee – allowing women to form special committees at branch level – might be even more disruptive for the movement!
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1935-36

(Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales

In submitting the annual report of the activities of the movement for the past twelve months we wish to point out to members that only the principal matters are referred to in reports from all sections.

Our members have been and still are going through very distressing times, and in spite of circumstances they remain loyal and fight with one end in view – the return of Labor Governments.

Campaigns

During the term under review, we took part in a State campaign and gained many seats, while others showed considerable improvement and a slight swing would have resulted in a Labor Government.

Newcastle Federal by-election campaign was also held, and in this campaign we wish to thank the many members of the movement for their valuable assistance.

In the municipal sphere considerable gain was made, campaigns resulting in the control of many of the councils.

Conferences

Both the Country conference, held at West Maitland, and the Metropolitan conference were very successful, delegates being interested and attentive, and many items of vital importance to our movement, as you will see by the present agenda were given full discussion and consideration by the delegates.

Unity

Pursuing the attitude that has been adopted since 1931, the executive in the year freely participated in further negotiations for the consolidation of the movement, with the result that a basis of unity was finally achieved in Melbourne at the conference which began on February 24.

As a result of the failure of the unity negotiations last year the executive sent three representatives – Messrs Keller, Graves and Martin – to Canberra in October last to confer with the Federal executive, and at these negotiations a basis of agreement was reached and signed by both parties.

Prior to the meeting of the Federal executive, however, our representatives conferred with duly-accredited representatives of the Labor
Party in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, at which conference an agreement was reached for concerted action to reform the constitution of the party in several particulars that were held by all four States to have been the causes of most of the friction and disunity in past years. It was in consequence of this conference that the delegates from the three other States pursued a unity settlement in the subsequent meeting of the Federal executive.

When the recent conference assembled in Melbourne our representatives were distressed to find that it had departed in some particulars from the formula agreed upon at Canberra, but in the light of the tremendous advantages to the workers of the Commonwealth that would accrue from unity, our representatives considered that the minor amendments that had been made were not of sufficient importance to justify them in rejecting the proposed settlement.

Accordingly they intimated that as soon as the resolution of expulsion had been rescinded and our six representatives accepted at the conference table they would accept the formula on behalf of New South Wales. The conference complied with these requirements, and unity was effected upon this basis.

The time remaining was too short to permit adequate consideration being given to the proposed measures of constitutional reform and upon receiving assurances from the delegates of Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, who participated in the Canberra four-State conference, that they would cooperate in giving effect to the decisions of that conference, our representatives agreed to allow the questions to be made items for the agenda of the triennial conference that was brought forward from October until July to meet our representations of urgency.

Our representatives have the greatest confidence that the delegates from these other States will at the July conference give effect to the document which their representatives signed at Canberra, in which case the unity settlement now concluded will be consolidated on a basis of permanency and efficiency that will remove for all time the fruitful causes of disharmony that have arisen previously. We found that delegates from practically every State were as anxious and jealous to preserve their own local autonomy rights as were our representatives from New South Wales.

The executive, in adopting the report of its delegates to the Melbourne conference felt that they had done a real service to the workers of this State, and expressed the opinion that the settlement would lead to a new era of progress and achievement by the Australian Labor movement. We believe that subsequent developments will vindicate this confidence.
Organising

The organisational work for the past year has been very satisfactorily carried out in an efficient manner by our organising secretary, Mr JB Martin.

During election and by-election campaigns he devoted the whole of his time to the return of Labor candidates, quite early in the year he concentrated on the State elections, and accompanied by the selected candidate toured many electorates. In Namoi electorate he visited and addressed meetings at: Gunnedah, Boggabri, Narrabri, Bingara; Barwon electorate, Inverell and Moree; Temora electorate, Junee, Temora, Marrar, Ganmain, Coolamon, Ariah Park; Ashburnham electorate, Canowindra, Eugowra, Parkes, Forbes, Peak Hill, Tomingly; Castlereagh electorate, Coonabarabran, Collarenebri, Baradine, Gwabegar, Pilliga, Burren Junction, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Coonamble. Gilgandra; Dubbo electorate, Wellington, Dubbo and Naromine; whilst Young, Orange, Bathurst and Cootamundra electorates were also included.

During the campaign extensive itineraries were drawn up, and an endeavor was made to send speakers to all electorates. During weekends our organising secretary transported speakers by car and addressed meetings in many places unable to be visited by train without considerable loss of time.

Numerous council and branch meetings were attended in both metropolitan and country areas. Councils included Monaro, Ashburnham, Parramatta, Hunter, Kogarah, Bankstown, Balmain, Hume, Eden-Monaro, Wollongong, Newcastle, Dubbo, Hurstville, North Sydney and Calare; amongst the branches Hillston, Bulli, Dee Why, Blacktown, Muswellbrook. Orange, Camden Park, Auburn, Harcourt West, Albury, Tumbarumba, Cootamundra and Galong.

Following on the scrutineers’ classes which were held every week at the Trades Hall, Kiama, Goulburn and Lithgow were visited for the purpose of instructing scrutineers that they in turn could instruct those in charge of out-lying centres of the electorate.

As well as organising work it was necessary to impose many other important duties in connection with the Movement on our Organising Secretary, also in the capacity of a member of the Legislative Council he carried out good work especially in connection with the unemployed. On account of his close contact with them he was able to ventilate their grievances and in many cases has been instrumental in bettering their conditions.

The Organising Secretary wishes to thank all members of the Movement, particularly country members, for the valuable assistance rendered to him when visiting their electorates, in arranging meetings, and generally tending to make his visit successful.

Amongst the newly formed and resuscitated branches are:
Euston  Tomingly
Taemas  Milperra
Lockhart  Cammeray
Jindabyne  Berrigan
Kinchela  Dalgety
Teralba  Scarborough
Bomaderry  Wyee
Berridale  Raby
Bowral  Wallerawang
Pagewood  Wilcannia
Gerringong  Old Bar
Kingston  North Wollongong
Singleton  Chipping Norton

Also the Sulphide Corporation Emps Union, Cockle Creek, Port Kembla Ironworkers, affiliated with the Party.

Commonwealth Parliament

During the past twelve months our nine Members in the House of Representatives have continued to make their presence felt, not only as a debating force, but because, by well-thought-out coordinated tactics, they have on many occasions created embarrassing situations for the Coalition Government.

Perhaps the most outstanding evidence of this was provided when, during the Sanctions Debate after the Prime Minister and Attorney-General had delivered their speeches, disclaiming the most outstanding possibility arising from their policy – the participation of Australia in an overseas war – our Leader, Mr Beasley, divulged the contents of Mr Hughes’ book, which were a complete contradiction to his Leader’s professions.

The immediate result was a demand by the Prime Minister for the resignation of Mr Hughes, which resulted in considerable dissension in the anti-Labor forces both inside and outside of Parliament.

During the last session, the Government introduced through the Senate some further obnoxious amendments to Section 2 (a) of the Crimes Act, of which perhaps the most savage provision was to permit of any person over the age of seventeen who was a member of an organisation declared under the well-known provision of the Act to be an ‘Unlawful Association’ to be committed to gaol even if a first offender, and retained in gaol for an indeterminate period in much the same fashion as an habitual criminal is treated.

This Bill was not proceeded with in the House of Representatives, partly because of the threatened hostility of the Opposition and partly because of the desire of the Government to get into the security of a recess, because of internal dissension in its ranks that was outwardly manifesting itself in angry scenes between Members of the Government.
groups and the defeat of the Government in Committee on several occasions during the latter portion of the session.

During the session the Government which had in three years remitted 9 million pounds in taxation, mostly to wealthy interests, brought forward a further Relief measure of a similar nature.

The Opposition moved an amendment that the Bill be withdrawn and redrafted in order to make provision for the complete restoration of the reductions in old-age and invalid pensions.

After vigorous debate the amendment was defeated and the Government continues to repudiate the definite pledge given by the Scullin Government in 1931 and subscribed to by the members of the present Government that immediately the Budget was balanced pensions would be restored.

Every opportunity has been taken by our Members to urge a complete restoration of pensions.

Mr Beasley moved the adjournment of the House to draw attention to the rapid trustification of the Steel Industry in Australia by the BHP, and demanded a Government investigation into its operations.

He drew attention to the fact that the BHP had drawn a million and a half pounds in subsidies and bounties from the Government during the past thirteen years and had been fostered and protected by Australian Governments, and now that it was firmly established returned the compliment by ordering two 8000-ton steamers to be built overseas, regardless of the fact that the men and materials and dockyards to do the job were available in Australia.

The motion was defeated, but it is felt that the publicity given to the operations of this industrial octopus, both in the House and at public meetings, and by wireless broadcasts, will have a steady effect.

During the last session the Party supported a motion of no confidence in the Government for:

1. Its failure to meet the House on more than thirty-nine days during the year.
2. Its failure to evolve any effective scheme to deal with unemployed and to evolve a permanent scheme of Rural Rehabilitation.

On this, as on all other occasions, when the matter of unemployment and the demand for a nation-wide reduction of the hours of labor has been raised by the Party, we were defeated on a purely party vote.

During the session the Repatriation Act was further amended with particular reference to ‘burnt-out’ men, that is, ex-soldiers who are considered by the Tribunals to be not 100 per cent efficient because of war service, and also broadened the scope of the Act to deal with soldiers suffering from TB, not necessarily attributable to War service.

The Party was successful in having one clause withdrawn, which contained all the worst features of the Crimes Act and the Old-Age
Invalid Pensions Act regarding the inquisition into the affairs of applicants for pensions and their relatives.

It is pleasing to record that during the past twelve months complete harmony and cooperation has existed between all Members of the Parliamentary Party. Each Member has individually shared the work and responsibility placed on him by the Party both inside and outside of the House and has at all times been prepared to assist the State Parliamentary Party and the Executive in any organisational work or public speaking necessary to place before the people the policy of the Australian Labor Party.

The members of the Party feel that this report would not be complete did we not place on record the splendid services of ex-Senator Dunn since his unfortunate defeat in the Senate elections. He has kept in the closest touch with the Party and has assisted in its research work and propaganda with the same zeal and enthusiasm as he displayed when a Member of the Commonwealth Senate.

**State Parliament**

Organisational work has occupied the attention of members of the Parliamentary Party since the State elections.

Two committees have been set up, one to deal with publicity and propaganda, the other to deal with organisational work in the electorates, chiefly in the country districts.

After much preparatory work, the committees commenced to operate in the electorates towards the close of the previous recess. Preparations are well in hand for an active campaign as soon as the present session of Parliament closes.

Members of the Party have taken an active part by assisting in organising relief for the wives and families of the workers who took part in the Seamen’s and Port Kembla industrial disputes.

The Leader and members of the Party have carried the fight for the Port Kembla men into Parliament.

Legislation introduced by the Government has been of a particularly vicious nature. The Government has closed down most of the Government unemployed works, and under the Farmers’ Relief Act many evictions of farmers have taken place.

Repeated attempts to compel the Government to introduce legislation to regulate house rents have failed. The Government is determined not to assist those occupying rented houses.

The Parliamentary Party hopes to make the coming year a good one from an organisational point of view and confidently anticipates early Labor victories in both Federal and State Parliaments.
Women’s Central Organising Committee

The Women’s Central Organising Committee has been a very active factor of our movement for the past twenty-nine years, and they have rendered valuable assistance by their constant attention to matters affecting the welfare of our movement.

During election campaigns the committee can always be relied upon to concentrate their activities on the return of Labor candidates.

In municipal campaigns they also display a great part, and at present two members occupy positions in council – Mrs L Fowler, Newtown Council, and Mrs M Dunn, Glebe Council – both of whom are in their second term.

In regard to pensions, endowment and humanitarian proposals, the committee have held many deputations to the responsible Ministers, and in most cases they have been successful in remedying grievances and restoring conditions.

The hostel work of the committee is deserving of great praise. The hostel in Sussex-street provides a good home for unemployed women, and has given shelter to over 11,680, and 35,196 meals have been provided.

At Redfern a hostel for men not only provides food and shelter, but makes provision for tobacco and clothing. At these hostels all who are unable to assist themselves are welcome.

A successful reunion was held during the year in honor of Mrs K Dwyer and Mrs E Seery, first president and secretary of the women’s organising [committee], also a grand social was held last Easter, and, due to the hard work of the committee, it was a great success, both financially and socially.

ALP Sports Federation

From results achieved in the past by the different ALP sporting associations, it was apparent that the further development of these bodies would prove of great value to the movement, for, by extending the scope of those particular sporting associations already in existence and developing those sports as yet in their infancy within the ALP movement, the younger generation would be given greater inducement to compete in our competitions which we hope to conduct on lines compatible with the size and strength of those controlled by outside organisations. Contact made in this way with the young people would, to some extent, familiarise them with the political workings of the Party, and perhaps eventually they would become active members of our branches, or at least strong supporters of the Party’s policy.

It was recognised that to achieve this objective, it would be necessary to coordinate in some way the various ALP sporting associations, and it was with this object in view that the ALP Sports Federation was formed.
Functioning under the direct control of the central executive, the Sports Federation consists of delegates appointed by that body and the affiliated associations, and in the short time that has elapsed since its establishment, a solid foundation has been built upon which will grow one of the most powerful sporting organisations in the State. It only remains now for the various branches to recognise the benefits which the Party will derive from having sport successfully organised within its ranks and for every member to give the Sports Federation their wholehearted support and cooperation.

Vigoro and Tennis
ALP Vigoro and Tennis associations have been operating for some time, and with plans now in hand for the winter competitions, the expansion of these two bodies is becoming most pronounced. The ambition of the officials is to secure sufficient entries to allow competitions to be conducted in districts, as this will eliminate, to a great extent, the expense and the time lost in travelling over wide areas. Immediately the district scheme comes into operation, the ALP competitions will become more popular, and the growth of the associations more rapid.

Golf
The Golf Club, which was formed only recently, proved to be a success from the time of its inception, and the membership, which is increasing every week, is representative of numerous metropolitan branches. Competitions are conducted regularly, and the standard of play has already reached a particularly high mark.

The facilities which the club is able to offer beginners have been freely availed of, and as a result the 'B' graders include many players who received their initiation into the game through the ALP Golf Club. Newcomers receive every encouragement and assistance, and the committee extends an invitation to anybody interested in this game to join up.

Swimming
Affiliation with the NSW Amateur Swimming Association was recently effected as the first step towards the formation of an ALP Swimming Club, which will have as its main event each season a relay race for the "JT Lang Challenge Cup", between teams nominated by the different ALP branches.

It is not difficult to visualise the keen interest that this event will create in ALP circles, as previous experience has shown that a swimming relay race is one of the most spectacular of aquatic events.
**Fighting Funds**

The Sports Federation, as an organising unit of the Party, has concerned itself not only with the promotion and development of sport but also with the raising of finance to supplement the Party’s Fighting Fund. A considerable amount was raised for this purpose by means of the recently-conducted Miss ALP Competition, the successful issue of which ensures its institution as an annual affair.

When the conditions under which the “Miss ALP, 1935” competition were to be conducted were framed, consideration was given to the need of finance by our branches, and provision was made whereby each branch received a refund of 25 per cent of the amount contributed by their members. It is apparent from the following list, which shows the amounts received from each branch, that the refunds in many cases were by no means inconsiderable sums, and that the branches will derive material benefit from their participation in future similar competitions.

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Labor Literary and Debating Society

On the recommendation of the Central Organising Committee, this important addition has been made in the past year to the organisational activities of the Movement.

The formation of the Society (constitution, rules, procedure, adjudication, etc.) was undertaken by Mr R Johnson (Central Organising Committee) and Mr N Hannelly (President, Haberfield Branch).

The broad objects of the Society being to stimulate increasing interest in Branch meetings and to develop the public speaking talent of the Movement, its inaugural activity was the conducting of a metropolitan debating competition, for which a handsome and valuable cup was donated by the management of the Labor Daily for presentation to the winning team. The competition has been organised and controlled most efficiently by the Management Committee, with the cooperation of participating branches and their teams, and of the official adjudicators, and the generally smooth manner in which the arrangements have been carried out reflects creditably on all concerned.

The competition, in which 35 teams have participated, has reached its final stages, the following teams having emerged as the winners in their respective divisions, viz.:

- Petersham.
- Stanmore.
- Punchbowl.
- Pyrmont ‘A’.
- Willoughby-Chatswood.
- Rockdale.
- Waverley Trams ‘A’.

These teams, which are to be congratulated on their success so far, are now engaged in the knock-out round, the contests in which are exciting the greatest possible interest amongst the branches concerned. The winning team in this round will have the honor of holding the Labor Daily Cup for the ensuing 12 months, or, alternatively the duration of the next competition. Special arrangements are in hand for the final debate, and if possible this will be broadcast from Station 2KY. A special word of praise for the successful conducting of the competition is due to Mr R Johnson (Secretary
of the Society) on whom a heavy burden of work and solicitude for detailed arrangements has fallen throughout the competition.

The reports submitted by the official adjudicators indicate that a generally high standard of debate has been exhibited in the competition contests, many of the debaters having shown outstanding merit. The subjects selected by the Management Committee, while covering a wide and comprehensive field of political, economic, and educational questions, bear in a great measure on the policy and platform of the Movement. The Society is, therefore, developing a large body of capable speakers, competent to expound or defend the policy of the Movement in general election campaigns. The importance of this cannot be too greatly emphasised.

The Society is fortunate in being able to secure the services of a sufficient number of experienced and capable adjudicators, and their helpful criticism and advice have been much appreciated by the less-experienced debaters participating in the competition. The Society is grateful for the valuable assistance which is thus being rendered by the adjudicators. The interest and encouragement of the Management of the Labor Daily is also very much appreciated.

This Society, having been established and conducted on the best practicable lines, is destined to be a permanent and valuable unit in the Movement. As soon as the current debating competition is finalised, arrangements will be taken in hand for the 1936 competition for the Labor Daily Cup.

We wish to thank all sections of the movement for their valuable assistance, which materially assisted to facilitate the large amount of work attempted and accomplished during the past term.

The Labor Daily is worthy of special mention, as by means of our newspaper all news appertaining to the movement has been correctly placed before our members, and having proved its worth is deserving at all times of the whole-hearted cooperation and assistance of members of the movement.

In concluding the report, mention must be made of the loyal and un-tiring efforts of the staff for the very capable way in which they performed their duties, which are of an arduous and confidential nature, and in the fulfilment require more than ordinary discretion and discernment.

PJ Keller, President.
JJ Graves, General Secretary
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1936

(The Sydney Morning Herald, 11, 13 April 1936)

Day 1, Friday, 10 April 1936

In Control. Lang Faction. Garden Case Deferred.

Easter Conference.

Voting at the Easter conference of the State Labour party yesterday indicated that the Lang faction was in complete control of the proceedings.

One subject that would have provoked an angry debate was a demand by Mr T Lynch (Public Utilities Group) for an inquiry into the charges of Mr JS Garden, MP, that executive officers of the party had endeavoured to coerce the Federal caucus of the party to move an amendment in the Federal House favouring the shipment of munitions to Italy; but on the block vote of the Lang faction the suspension of standing orders to enable the matter to be discussed was refused.

Representatives of the Miners’ Federation objected to the exclusion from the balance sheet of a debt of £3250 allegedly owing to the federation because of a loan made to the party in connection with the ballot box case.

There was much talk of the violation of the basic union principle of ‘one man one job’ when the rules were amended to enable Mr Shannon, MLA, who represents Phillip in the State House to remain an alderman of the City Council.

Mr Lang in the course of a defence of his action as Premier in raising the unemployment relief tax to 1/ in the £ admitted that it was a direct tax on wages but claimed that he had increased the tax to maintain widows’ pensions, family endowment and other social services.

The Proceedings

Delegates from all parts of the State attended the conference which is the governing body of the State Labour movement. The chairman of the conference was the president of the State Labour party (Mr PJ Keller) and the visitors included a number of State and Federal Parliamentarians.

The election of the conference officials revealed that the Lang faction was in complete control of the management of the conference, and that
the majority of the delegates were pledged supporters of the plans of the faction.

Contrary to expectations several stormy scenes occurred at the opening session which is usually a formal one.

The proceedings were conducted with an unusual amount of secrecy. Press representatives were excluded and visitors were subjected to rigid scrutiny before they were allowed admission to the conference hall.

**Mr Garden’s Charges**

Addressing the conference the chairman (Mr PJ Keller) outlined the negotiations which had led to the drawing up of the unity proposals and gave a detailed report on the unity proceedings in Melbourne. He hoped that when the actual terms of the settlement came up for consideration by the conference they would be adopted.

Trouble developed when Mr T Lynch moved the suspension of standing orders to discuss the question of Mr JS Garden, MP. He suggested that a committee should be set up to inquire into the charges made by Mr Garden against members of the Labour movement. He claimed that the attempt to send munitions to any country for the conduct of warfare was not in accord with the principle of the movement. He was of the opinion that the hush up policy being adopted in this direction was not the correct one. The movement as a whole, he said, should be informed of the true position, irrespective of whether it was hurtful to certain people. He claimed that the matter should be brought before the conference.

The chairman said that the Labour party had appointed a special committee to inquire into the question of Mr Garden’s allegations. Until that committee had made its report it was not within the province of conference to discuss the matter.

Mr Lynch replied that as far as he could see the conference which represented the rank and file of the Labour movement was being overridden by a committee set up by certain people. Uproar followed. Bells rang while delegates shouted recriminations. It was some time before order was restored. The discussion was then gagged by the block vote of the Lang faction.

Another rowdy scene occurred when Mr C Townsend suggested that the executive officers at the next day’s session should present a statement giving full details of the doings of the party. It appeared, he said, that whenever accurate information was wanted one had to read the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He asked that information should be provided setting out the financial position of the various unions and the party and the representation that these unions were entitled to.

The general secretary (Mr JJ Graves, MLC) presented his annual report embodying the financial statement and balance sheet.
The Miners’ Money

Mr J Duffin (Miners) said that no mention was made in the balance sheet of the £3250 owing to the Miners’ Federation in connection with the ballot box case. This amount represented the balance of a loan by the miners to the Lang party which had not been repaid. He could not understand why this amount had not been specifically mentioned on the balance sheet as a liability. He wanted to know whether the controllers of the party were attempting to repudiate the debt.

Mr Graves replied that the party had never assumed liability for this money. It had never been placed on the balance sheet as a liability.

Another miners’ delegate, Mr W Crooks, strongly protested against the explanation given by Mr Graves and claimed that it was a responsibility on the party.

The chairman admitted that the Labour party was responsible for this money and that it would repay it when it could. He pointed out that a previous conference of the party had decided that although this money had not passed through the hands of the ALP it had been agreed that it would be repaid when funds allowed. The matter was then dropped.

The balance-sheet submitted to the conference disclosed a deficit on the year’s operations of £1062/11/7.

Wages Tax

Alderman Whelan, of Paddington, moved that under no consideration should any tax be inflicted upon employees who were receiving the living wage or less.

Mr Lang made a long explanation why he increased the unemployment relief tax from 1/3 to 1/ in the £. He admitted that his act amounted to a reduction in wages of 9/ in the £. He said he had done it to preserve the margins and pensions and family endowment. He had been responsible for a small reduction in wages, but the Nationalist Government had placed a greater burden on the workers. The motion was carried.

Mr Burnett, a member of the executive, moved that the rules of the party should be amended to enable Mr Shannon, MLA, the member for Phillip, to remain an alderman of the City Council. He claimed that it would be disastrous if Alderman Shannon were compelled to vacate his position in the council. Being a Parliamentary representative of a city seat, with his headquarters in the city, he was capable of discharging both duties.

A voice: What about one man one job? The motion was carried.

Mr Craig (Northern Miners) moved that the extraction of oil from coal should be made a fighting plank of the platform of the Labour party.
Mr Craig declared that the Australian production of oil from coal was essential. The motion was carried.

**Compulsory Retirement Scheme**

A long discussion took place on a motion that the next Labour Government should be instructed to proceed immediately with a scheme for the compulsory retirement of all workers at the age of 60 years on a pension equivalent to the basic wage, such pension to be a charge on industry. One delegate said it was a tragedy to see old men hobbling to work with the assistance of a walking stick, while young men were unable to secure employment. Another delegate declared that under present conditions the strong and healthy youth of today had no chance of getting into industry while old men remained there. The motion was carried.

**Other Decisions**

A protracted discussion took place at the afternoon session on the amendments introduced by the Government to the Railway and Transport Act. It was decided to cooperate with the campaign of the unions and the Labour Council in opposition to the proposals. The conference carried a motion that immediately upon the return of a State Labour Government all Government banking business and all accounts of departments, boards, and Government institutions be done through the Commonwealth Bank, thus following Labour’s policy of national control of credit. Another decision was that in cases where the landholder was in need of financial help from the State, and had a private loan from a bank or private moneylender, there should be a provision that would compel the moneylender to come to a revaluation of his loan and compromise with the State and farmer.

Other decisions were: That the movement work actively for the State to take over the control and proper working of the coal, shale, and oil industries; that the extraction of oil from coal and shale be made a plank of the platform of the Labour party; further, that Newnes, with its complete plant and large basin of rich shale, be made a pivotal point of such production; that no more loans be floated, and that credits be made available through the Commonwealth Bank to finance all public works and social services, thereby utilising the social credit of the nation; that the next Labour Government repeal the Returned Soldiers’ Employment Preference Act; that the conference direct that sustained agitation by the central executive and the Parliamentary party be engaged in to ensure those employees who were retrenched in the railways and tramways and are now designated as ‘casuals’ being restored to a permanent status, and that men employed after 1930 should have the same privileges and concessions as enjoyed by those in the Commissioners’ employ prior to
1930; that the produce of small woolgrowers be sold on the same footing as that of the large grower, and that the star lots that are now sold be eliminated; that a vigorous policy of land settlement be adopted, a revaluation of all lands be immediately made, and large holdings adjacent to railways and rivers be subdivided, and that the title be one of perpetual tenancy, the annual rent to be assessed at not more than 3 per cent on the capital value of the land, with a residence clause included in the tenure; that the Pawnbrokers Act be amended to provide as follows: - That the licence fee be doubled, the fixation of a maximum rate of interest on loans, that where any article is pawned and sold for more than the amount of the principal money and interest thereon, plus the charges of such sale, the surplus shall be paid into consolidated revenue, and that the Government appoint an auctioneer to conduct all auctions under the above Act.

During a debate on the present educational system, Mr Gould, of Glebe, declared that High schools were dens of snobbery. The teachers of today, he said, were recruited from a class opposed to the workers. The system of education was deliberately organised to drive the workers' children in the industrial areas out of the schools.

A motion was carried that the next Labour Government should appoint a committee to investigate the system of education, such committee to have the power to coopt teachers.

Nominations for official positions disclosed that the chairman (Mr P Keller) would be opposed for the presidency by Mr T Hartley, and that the organising secretary (Mr JB Martin, MLC) would be opposed by Mr T Lynch.

**Unity Proposals Adopted**

The unity proposals drafted in Melbourne recently, under which the Lang party is granted reaffiliation with the Federal Labour party, were approved by the conference. A detailed report of the negotiations was submitted by Mr JB Martin, MLC, organising secretary, who moved the motion adopting the terms of settlement.

Mr J Duffin: I do not want to interfere with the unity proposals, but I am going to ask an awkward question. Where does Mr Theodore stand in the matter?

The chairman replied that if Mr Theodore made an application, it would be dealt with under the rules and constitution.

At 10 30 pm the conference adjourned until today.
Day 2, Saturday, 11 April 1936

State Labour Conference ends. Disciplining Labour Members.

Mr Lang’s speech.

The Easter conference of the State Labour party, which concluded its sittings on Saturday night, adopted a number of new rules designed to compel Labour members in the State House to vote in accordance with the official Labour ticket in Upper House elections.

Proposals for disciplining recalcitrant members were drafted, including seven years’ expulsion for members adjudged guilty of offering or accepting “gifts, bribes, or inducements”.

Other decisions were to form anti-conscription committees in the various leagues, to compel Labour-controlled municipal councils to give preference to members of the Labour movement when appointing solicitors and auditors, and to instruct the next Labour Government to guarantee £20 funeral expenses for persons who had not averaged £260 in wages during the twelve months preceding their death.

Mr Lang, in a speech to the conference, revealed his plans for the creation of a company to control the Labour Council’s broadcasting station, 2KY, and referred to whisperers who were endeavouring to disrupt the Labour movement. He forecasted that, with the achievement of unity, the Labour party would be successful at the next State and Federal elections.

Mr Lang, in his speech to the conference, declared that the leaders of the ALP and the unions had agreed upon the formation of a company to control 2KY, such company to issue 7000 shares, the Labour Council to get 4000 and the ALP 1000, and Mr Lang’s newspaper 2000. Each party would have a director for each 1000 shares. While the ALP and Labour Council shares would be free, the directors of Mr Lang’s paper would pay £2000 cash for theirs. The scheme would be submitted to a meeting of the Labour Council in a fortnight’s time. The directors of his paper had decided that the Labour party must have a wireless chain after they had reviewed the coordination in the Commonwealth of ‘anti-Labour’ newspapers and wireless stations. Plans had been prepared for this development, and a company had been formed. Negotiations were begun to acquire a metropolitan station and several country stations. A number of unions affiliated with the Labour Council believed it unnecessary for the newspaper to go to the expense of acquiring a metropolitan station when the movement had 2KY. So a move was begun by those unions within the council to coordinate the 2KY station and Mr Lang’s paper, thus rendering the purchase of another station unnecessary. In view of this, the directors of his paper had temporarily suspended their negotiations for acquiring a metropolitan station. The Press had referred to it as a bitter factional fight within the movement allegedly over the ownership
of 2KY. “When we discussed the matter with the secretary of the Labour Council”, Mr Lang continued, “we found that there was no faction fight, and that there was an earnest desire on the part of everybody to coordinate both organs of publicity for the good of the Labour movement. As a result the Labour Council secretary and a member of the wireless committee, with the president and secretary of the ALP, met the party leaders, Mr Beasley and myself, in conference. We discovered that this coordination could be brought about without putting the movement to the extra expense of purchasing and maintaining an additional wireless station.”

**Question of Control**

Mr Lang stated it was quite clear that the proposal would not involve any question of ownership. Control of the station must remain with the Labour Council because it held a majority of shares and would have a majority on the directorate. Coordination would be provided by drawing additional directors from his paper and the ALP.

It was to carry out this agreement that Mr King, secretary of the Labour Council, and Mr JS Garden, MP, went to the council a fortnight ago and gave notice of the rescission of the resolution setting up the existing control of the station so that the new control might take its place. In a fortnight’s time Mr King and Mr Garden would move for the adoption of the proposal in the Labour Council.

**“Not a Goldmine”**

Mr Lang claimed that the proposal was simple and constructive. The Council would retain the ownership of the station. It was not a goldmine and last year had lost £900. The financing of station 2KY had been shared by many sections of the movement. Originally founded by Mr Voigt, later Mr Beasley, Mr Graves, Mr Sinclair, and other union officials pledged everything they had to finance the station properly. Later the unions found more money. In 1927 when the station was in difficulties Mr Lang said that he put up £1000 to enable them to carry on. The four years preceding 1935 were good trading years and the station was able to wipe out most of its liabilities to the members of the movement, including himself. The station had been established by cooperative effort and it was to continue this cooperation that leaders of the party entered into their arrangement.

**Mr Lang’s Hopes**

Referring to the recent unity negotiations Mr Lang stated that they had achieved real unity. We should let it be known that there is a real welcome
within the movement for all those covered by the unity terms, Mr Lang said. I am sure the merging will go as smoothly as it went at Canberra. There Mr Beasley led his party into the unity caucus claiming no other rights than as a member of the caucus. Unity will lead the Labour party into government at the next Federal and State elections. There are immense problems that concern thousands of you that can only be solved by victory at the next elections. The whole of your wage levels have been destroyed. They must be restored. Overtime and speed-up methods which have broken down industrial conditions must be eliminated. Licences must disappear along the waterfront.

**Women’s Committee Abolished**

After an animated debate the conference decided to abolish the Women’s Central Organising Committee of the party, which for a number of years has taken a prominent part in the affairs of the movement.

The conference decided that in place of the central committee women’s committees should be set up in each ALP branch.

The attack on the committee was launched by Mr AW McNamara (United Labourers) who moved the motion for the abolition of the committee. He was bitterly criticised by many women delegates who defended the administration of the committee. Charges were made by supporters of the motion to disband the committee that the proceedings at committee meetings had become unruly and had reflected upon the prestige of the movement.

Women delegates retaliated by declaring that the debates of the committee were orderly compared with those of recent Labour Council meetings. Many delegates expressed doubt whether the conference in abolishing the central committee and agreeing to the formation of branch committees was achieving the purpose of the motion. They contended that the smaller committees would probably provide more trouble than the existing central committee.

The operations of the central committee in connection with its hostels came in for much criticism. There were many heated and rowdy scenes in which the women delegates predominated. At one stage the chairman, Mr P Keller, threatened to adjourn the proceedings. Suggestions of maladministration were made, and these were met by counter-charges concerning the administration of the party itself, and the leaders of the trade union movement.

**“Gifts, Bribes, Inducements”**

Another decision of the conference was the adoption of a long recommendation from the Metropolitan conference, designed to provide disciplinary measures for recalcitrant members in Upper House elections.
Reference was made to the last Upper House elections, in which the plans of the ruling faction to organise the Labour vote by the circulation of official tickets were ignored, and in some cases, openly flouted. The recommendation provided that “any Labour candidate offering, or any Labour member accepting, any gift, bribe, or inducement to influence the vote of any member, or failing to record his vote as instructed by the executive, shall be expelled from the Labour movement for a period of not less than seven years”.

It was also provided that members of the Labour party should support only those candidates who had been endorsed by the ALP central executive, and should exercise their preference votes as directed by the executive.

The following new rules were incorporated in the recommendation:

That Labour candidates for election to the Legislative Council must be financial members of the ALP in the area in which they reside, and shall be eligible in accordance with the rules and constitution of the ALP, State of New South Wales, and must be nominated by not less than six financial members of the ALP.

The credentials of such nominators shall be certified to by the general secretary. The candidate must also give his written consent to such nomination, and, before going to the ballot for election, shall be endorsed by the ALP executive. The central executive shall meet prior to the date of such election to consider nominations and make endorsements where candidates are eligible in accordance with the rules of the ALP – such business shall take precedence over other business.

Government Burials

Much interest was aroused by the adoption of a motion submitted by the Metropolitan conference that the Government should provide a fund and should guarantee funeral expenses, at a minimum of £20, to any deceased person who had not averaged £260 in wages during the previous 12 months.

Anti-Conscription Committees

The suspension of the standing orders was granted to enable the conference to carry a motion that the executive should immediately take steps to organise anti-conscription committees in each ALP branch, the work of which would be “to oppose all attempts, in the event of war, to foist conscription upon the manhood of Australia for oversea service”.

The conference also carried a resolution that all municipal and shire councils, where Labour had a majority, must, when appointing solicitors and auditors, give preference to those applicants who are financial members of the Labour movement, and who observe union conditions in
their offices. “This principle shall apply absolutely to all appointments in the Labour movement”, the resolution added.

Delegates from the country supported a motion that the Labour Minister for Agriculture in the next Labour Government must see that all wheat owned by wheat speculators is removed from Government silos one month from the date of purchase. The motion was carried.

The conference also decided that the law respecting cheques should be altered to make it a criminal offence for bank depositors to draw cheques for an amount in excess of their bank balance, and that free railway transit should be granted to the unemployed when seeking employment in suburban or country districts.

**Medical Examinations**

Standing orders were again suspended during the afternoon session to enable the conference to deal with the question of medical examinations under the Workers’ Compensation Act. A resolution was carried, that the conference should protest against the action of the insurance companies in instructing employers to send employees to insurance company doctors in contravention of Section 10 of the Workers’ Compensation Act.

The conference adopted a resolution that the representation from metropolitan branches to the central executive should be increased from four to eight.

During the debate the Australian Railways’ Union made strenuous attempts to obtain direct representation on the ALP executive.

**Mr Lang on Propagandists**

Mr Lang spoke against a motion from the Metropolitan conference dealing with the appointment of private secretaries to Labour Ministers, and was responsible for its defeat. It was suggested in the motion that “publicity officers, propagandists, or private secretaries” should be appointed from members of the ALP with three years’ financial membership. The resolution proposed that any Labour member violating the rule should be removed from office by caucus, and his ALP endorsement withdrawn.

Mr Lang said that the procedure was for private secretaries to be allotted to Ministers by the Public Service Board. “I have no doubt”, he added, “that Ministers see they get the kind of secretaries they want. If men are brought in from outside they would be immediately dismissed by the first anti Labour Government in power. Labour does not employ propagandists. This Government does, but this Government has the backing of wealthy outside interests who can afford to pay for such service as propagandists and direct telephone lines. Labour has no wealthy Interests behind it.”
“A Commercial Success”

Mr Lang described his paper as being the greatest achievement not only in the Labour movement and in Australia, but in the English-speaking world. There was nothing to compare with it. All other Labour papers had either closed down or sold out to anti-Labour Governments. His paper was union owned and controlled, and was a commercial success. It was necessary to expand the paper, and there was a demand and a need for a Sunday paper.

“As far as the whisperers are concerned”, said Mr Lang, “they will have to come out into the open. Anyone who tries to involve the party in a faction fight is definitely working to destroy the possibility of a Labour Government”.

Mr Beasley, MP, announced that he was definitely behind Mr Lang in the matter of his coordination scheme. Anybody who opposed the scheme would be treated as an enemy within the movement, and would be fought.

In supporting a vote of confidence in Mr Lang which was carried, Mr F Kelly said that Mr Beasley by his statement was behind Mr Lang. He pointed out that the militant section of the Labour Council commanded between 38 and 48 votes, and was well organised. After the leader spoke, they voted in a solid block. ALP supporters on the Council, however, were divided and were often to be seen voting with the militants.

Defeated Candidates

The conference also carried a resolution that any Government employee elected to Parliament should be re-employed if defeated at a subsequent election.

Another decision was that the policy of the next Labour Government should be to put into operation a scientific method of dealing with sewage and that the discharge of sewage near the beaches should cease.

Election of Officers

The election of officers resulted in the re-appointment of Mr PJ Keller as president, Mr J Gibson vice-president, and Mr JB Martin, MLC, as organising secretary.

Other Decisions

Other resolutions carried by the conference included the following:-That employers advertising vacant positions in the Press must state their business, name and address, wages, hours, and conditions; that the garnishee of wages be abolished; that rights given or sold to land-holders to put
gates across the main roads running through their properties be withdrawn by the next Labour Government; that a vigorous policy of public works be adopted for the construction of river locks water conservation, irrigation, bores etc. to retrieve wastelands; that no persons shall in future be endorsed for any Parliamentary, shire or municipal council whose record shows that such person, having been a member of any Parliamentary or local government body, has failed without just cause or excuse, to record his or her vote for or in defence of Labour legislation; that the next Federal Labour Government shall legislate with a view to full and free dominion status, by the immediate ratification of the Statute of Westminster by the Commonwealth Parliament.

The conference adjourned *sine die*. 