This Conference was held only a fortnight after the NSW election of 26 March 1938, at which Lang had once again failed, for the third time in a row, to even make a significant impression. The reason for this defeat was that his party was once again at the centre of a Labor split. The Industrialists of the Socialisation Units, in cooperation with disaffected members of Caucus, and with the active cooperation of Communists, had formed an ‘Industrial Labor Party’, led by RJ Heffron, to contest against Lang’s Party. The new party won only two seats, but their presence had been a political gift for the ruling UAP and the daily press, which were able to hammer the themes of a divided labour movement and a Communist threat. As the Premier, Bertram Stevens, had proclaimed, “Mr Lang is the Government’s best asset”.

By the time of the election and the Conference Lang had lost control over the Labor Daily and radio station 2KY, had virtually no trade union support, and had proved that his continuation at the head of the NSW Labor movement would prevent any possible victory of the Labor party either at Federal level or in NSW. His days were numbered.

One interesting development noted at the end of the Conference was the report of Lang’s determination to get Labor members to contest trade union elections against Communist leadership. The ALP policy of setting up the Industrial Groups in 1945 to defeat Communism in the unions was there in embryo.
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1937-38

(Australian Labor Party, State Of New South Wales
Executive Report, 1937-38)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 1937-38 period under review will go down in the history of the Labor Movement in NSW as one of the most important since the Labor Party was established. Not only was it a period during which the party achieved signal victories, but it had to face the bitter opposition of Labor’s natural opponents on the one hand, and a concerted ‘United Front’ drive on the other.

This ‘United Front’ attack upon the Labor Party represented a desperate attempt by the Communist Party and dissident factions to seize control of the movement.

As we emphasised in our last Annual Report, the concerted effort to smash the movement, which was materially assisted by the anti-Labor forces, commenced with the announcement of Labor’s coordination plans, the effectiveness and necessity of which has been proven by subsequent experience.

Commencing with the conference on August 1, 1936, the Communist Party and those individuals styling themselves ‘Industrialists’, conducted an insidious campaign against the Labor Movement, the only effect and purpose of which could be to weaken the party’s appeal to the people.

The Federal Executive of the ALP, which met in Sydney on April 22, 1937, declared in specific terms its strong disapproval of the manner in which the Sydney Labor Council was being used to try and override the constitution of the Labor Party in an effort to foist certain individuals, including JS Garden, upon the Labor Movement.

The Federal Executive declared its opposition to the August 1 conference that was called to try and establish the ‘United Front’ and to secure the reinstatement of Garden in the Labor Party.

While it readmitted those expelled from the Labor Party in this State for attending the banned August 1 conference, the Federal Executive did so with censure upon those concerned and on condition that the Continuations Committee was disbanded and the proposed United Front Conference, to have been called on May 14, 1937, was abandoned.

In addition, Mr CC Lazzarini was readmitted only after he had made a complete apology for his utterances in Parliament.
'United Front' Excuses

While Mr Garden’s expulsion was made the excuse for the ‘United Front’ attacks upon the Labor Party, the Federal Executive’s attitude towards Garden was summed up by Mr PJ Clarey (Vic.) in his declaration that: “Garden is a peculiar mixture of emotionalism and theatricalism. He is not always aware of what he says when he gets up before an audience.”

Mr Calwell (Vic.) declared: “I would not vote for Garden. Politically, I think he is an undesirable person to be in the Federal Parliament.”

But this was the same Mr Garden that was used as the excuse by the ‘United Front’ to continue the white-anting drive against the Labor Movement and to sabotage the workers’ cause.

The Federal Executive left no doubt as to where it stood in respect to NSW Labor’s refusal to be a party to the Communist ‘United Front’. A motion was unanimously carried repudiating the Communist Party and rejecting as spurious its ‘United Front’ approaches.

While the so-called ‘Industrialists’ purported to accept the decisions of the Federal Executive, the Communist Party issued an official declaration that “The fight must go on”. And the Communist Party’s control of the Labor Council has since been used to see that the fight did go on.

The attempt to undermine the Labor Movement has never been abandoned. Rather has it been intensified with the consistent support of the anti-Labor newspapers.

Just as the ‘United Fronters’ launched their first attack on the eve of the Gwydir by-election in an effort to rob the party of victory, so did they call another conference on the eve of the general municipal elections. At this conference at the Trades Hall on November 18, 1937, a number of candidates were endorsed to contest the municipal elections against the selected and endorsed Labor candidates. Thus, the ‘United Front’ became a new political party.

But the real significance of the ‘United Front’ was made clear by the declarations of support by leading members of the Communist Party. Mr William Orr declared: “I am a Communist and proud of it”, while the foundation secretary of the Communist Party in NSW, Mr HL Denford, demanded that a purge be conducted in Australia “similar to those being conducted in Soviet Russia”.

It was on this basis that the Communist-Industrialist ‘United Front’ drive proceeded. Every opportunity was seized upon to try and hamper the work of the Labor Party.

Provisional Executive

While the movement in this State was making preparations for the State elections on March 26, the ‘United Front’ called another conference on January 22, and it was at this gathering that all pretence was swept aside.
and the ‘United Front’ party was officially formed, with a ‘Provisional Executive’ taking the place of the former ‘Continuations Committee’.

On this ‘Provisional Executive’ we find Mr HL Denford sitting side by side with the former general-secretary of the Communist Party, Mr JS Garden, Dr Lloyd Ross, advocate of the Communist policy, and Mr W McNamara, whom members will remember tried to establish a dictatorship of the movement through the medium of the Socialisation Units.

The secretary of the ‘United Front’ conference was RA King, who was selected immediately afterwards as delegate to attend the celebrations in Moscow in connection with the anniversary of the Russian revolution.

On January 28, the Central Executive of the ALP outlawed the Communist ‘United Front’ party and its ‘Provisional Executive’ and declared that the continued association of any member of the party with the ‘United Front’ would involve automatic expulsion from the Labor Party.

It was at this meeting of the Central Executive that Mr J Connell (Northern Miners) declared that Mr F Bonar, a member of the Miners’ Federation, had been induced to accept a position on the ‘Provisional Executive’ by certain officers of his organisation. He had not attended any meetings of the ‘Provisional Executive’ and had no intention of doing so.

The president, Mr Keller, pointed out that under the terms of the motion, Mr Bonar’s membership in the Labor Movement would remain intact. This applied also to other members who did not become parties to the activities of the Communist ‘United Front’ and the ‘Provisional Executive’.

While functioning as a political organisation, the ‘United Front’ party nominated six candidates in State electorates, in opposition to the endorsed candidates of the Labor Party. The Communist Party opposed the endorsed Labor candidates in four other electorates.

This situation was seized upon by the anti-Labor newspapers as a means of dividing the Labor Movement. The propaganda was the most intense that has ever been experienced, but despite this the members of the movement stood solidly together, as was demonstrated by the splendid response that was received to the appeal for campaign funds.

**Labor Daily Control**

On February 21, the ‘Industrialists’, by mortgaging the funds of a number of unions to a guarantee fund, and by the accommodation provided by the Bank of New South Wales, assumed control of the *Labor Daily*.

What had been the official organ of the Labor Party was turned against the movement and its leaders, in the same way that the anti-Labor Press were turned against the movement.
The Central Executive of the ALP withdrew the imprimatur of the movement from the Labor Daily and it ceased to be the official organ of the party. The paper’s influence in the movement ceased from that day.

Members will appreciate how well the activities of the ‘Industrialists’ have seemed to fit in with the election plans of the Stevens Government.

The propaganda that there was a division in Labor’s ranks was hollow until ‘United Front’ candidates were placed in the field, while negotiations in respect to the control of the Labor Daily very conveniently concluded as the election campaign commenced in earnest. The whole thing could not have been timed better to hamper the Labor Party’s campaign.

But instead of demoralising the movement, as it was obviously hoped, this ‘United Front’ opposition from the Stevens Government, the anti-Labor Press, the Communist Party and the ‘Industrialists’, strengthened the resolve of members throughout the State to intensify their efforts.

State Elections

The magnificent vote recorded for the Labor Party and the crushing blow administered to the Communist-Industrialist ‘United Front’ at the State elections on March 26 was the most effective answer to the vicious attempts to smash Labor in NSW and to crucify its leaders.

In the 51 electorates contested by Labor, the primary votes polled for the selected Labor candidates totalled approximately 450,000.

In respect to the remaining 31 seats, with ten Labor candidates returned unopposed, an analysis of the 1935 figures and a comparison with the Federal election results last year show that Labor improved on its 714,000 Senate votes which gave the party such a splendid victory.

Another 1000 votes would have given Labor at least ten more seats. For the loss of these we can look no further than to the sabotage of the so-called ‘Industrialists’ and their ‘United Front’. Prior to and throughout the campaign, the anti-Labor newspapers and the Stevens Government, made full use of the propaganda of the ‘Industrialists’ and in every contested electorate the Labor Party had to fight this ‘United Front’s attempt to confuse and divide the electors.

It was a strange ‘United Front’ this. It was a case where the Stevens Government, the anti-Labor Press, the Communist Party and the ‘Industrialists’ all spoke with one voice in their opposition to Labor.

But Labor emerged, not only with its organisation stronger than ever, but it commanded the support of more than half a million voters, stamping the movement in this State as the strongest political force in the Commonwealth.

The Communist Party nominated four candidates and the ‘Industrialists’ six. There was not only an exchange of preference between these ‘United Fronters’, but an exchange of support within the electorates.
The Communist Party emerged from the poll tattered and torn, with public contempt heaped upon it. For the ‘Industrialists’, Mr Heffron was returned in Botany largely on the votes of the UAP, while Mr Lazzarini in Marrickville was saved only by the preferences of the selected Labor candidate.

Possibly the best answer to the whole of the attacks upon the party was provided by the electors of Auburn, who returned the leader of the Labor Party, Mr Lang, with an enhanced majority, despite the concentrated effort that was directed behind the campaign of his Industrialist opponent.

The regaining of the Granville seat was a splendid victory. The successful Labor candidate, Ald WH Lamb, was formerly Mayor of Auburn.

Disclosures that have been made in the count at Petersham, where the sitting UAP member has been returned with a small majority over the selected Labor candidate, may have widespread repercussions. It is possible that a close investigation in some other seats where the margin is small may reveal an equally interesting position.

Once again, this demonstrates the necessity for Labor establishing thorough polling booth organisation. Every table should be manned with scrutineers; every vote should be scrutinised before it is admitted to the count.

That is organisation upon which the movement will concentrate between now and the next election.

Federal Elections

The outstanding feature of the Federal elections on October 23, 1937, was the return of Labor’s Senate teams in every State except South Australia. It is no exaggeration of the position to say that the party would have secured the hat-trick and, incidentally, virtual control of the Federal Parliament, but for disruptive influences that split the Labor vote in South Australia. What that means to the Labor Movement is hard to estimate, but it would certainly have changed the whole complexion of Australian politics.

Labor in NSW had a signal victory by securing the election of its four Senate candidates, Messrs SK Amour, J Armstrong, T Arthur and W Ashley.

In the House of Representatives the Labor Party slightly improved its position. The gerrymandering of the electorates, however, made the position of the party extremely difficult.

The Senate vote clearly showed that Labor had the support of a majority of the electors, but this expression of opinion was not reflected in the returns for the House of Representatives.

In the election campaign, the Federal Leader, Mr Curtin, had the active and wholehearted support of the party throughout the Commonwealth. Dissident fractions on the fringe of the movement and individuals who
had failed in their hunt for jobs did their utmost to sabotage the movement’s efforts.

So far as NSW was concerned, these elements were given expression through the Sydney Labor Council that carried its campaign of sabotage to the extent of launching a separate campaign fund. The fact that only £200, of which £100 came from the Miners’ Federation, was subscribed to this fund, showed the contempt of the rank and file for this form of blatant disruption.

It was significant that while the so-called ‘Industrialists’ sought to sabotage the Labor Party in its drive for funds, which are the very life-blood of our organisation in an election campaign, the Communist Party also conducted a ‘Defeat the Lyons Government Fund’, although it did not have a candidate in the field in NSW. It was therefore a further demonstration of the ‘United Front’ sabotage.

**Federal Referenda**

The crushing blow that was suffered by the Lyons Government in its Marketing and Aviation Referenda on March 6, 1937, would have caused any self-respecting government to have resigned.

Labor in NSW took the leadership of the fight against the Government and the nationwide broadcasts were delivered by Mr JA Beasley, MHR.

It was unfortunate that the Federal Leader of the party, Mr Curtin, was unable to participate in the campaign, particularly because of the fact that the general elections were approaching. His neutral attitude on such vital questions was forced upon by the policy that was adopted, independently of the Federal Parliamentary Caucus, by one of the State Executives.

There does not seem to be any doubt that had the party throughout the Commonwealth spoken with a united voice on this issue, the victory itself would have been still more decisive, while the effect of the defeat of the Lyons Government could have been carried with much greater effect in the Federal election campaign.

It was obvious that the Federal Conference of the party held in Adelaide in July, 1936, had visions of such a situation when, at the instigation of Mr Curtin, the following motion was carried.

“That the question of how and when referenda shall be held for carrying out the party’s policy in regard to Commonwealth’s powers shall be decided by the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.”

This resolution was given effect to by the Federal Caucus in respect to the Lyons Government’s referenda proposals, but the State Executive in question insisted upon exercising its local autonomy rights and instructed its Federal members to carry out the decision of the State and not that of the Federal Caucus.
While the observance of State autonomy rights is a vital matter, experience has shown that it is very largely a question “Which State is doing the observing”.

The Federal Conference sought to bring about coordination of effort through a single instrumentality. There is no doubt that coordination of all the movement’s activities in all the States would be a valuable contribution to a splendid victory at the next Federal elections.

_Gwydir By-Election_

The magnificent victory of the party in the Gwydir by-election on May 8, 1937, was a triumph against sabotage and demonstrated in a striking manner what can be achieved by concentrated organisation.

In addition to the splitting tactics of the so-called ‘Industrialists’, the party was also faced with the fact that the Federal Executive was called together in Sydney in the midst of this vital by-election.

There is no doubt that the propaganda that came out of the Federal Executive and which was seized upon by the anti-Labor Press, robbed the party of a considerable number of votes, but the combined efforts of the enemies of the Movement were unable to rob the party of a signal victory.

Federal and State members worked as one man throughout the campaign. Zone organisation under the immediate direction of the organising-secretary, Mr JB Martin, was established in the electorate on a basis that had never previously been attempted. For the first time every polling booth, even those in remote centres, were fully manned and every vote was counted under the supervision of scrutineers.

The Federal leader, Mr Curtin, the leader of the party in NSW, Mr Lang, the Deputy-Federal leader, Mr Forde, and Mr JA Beasley, MHR, actively campaigned in the by-election.

Mr Lang confounded his opponents by taking the gloves off and campaigning on the so-called ‘Lang bogey’. And in every centre that he spoke the Labor vote was materially increased.

Throughout the by-election the Federal Government canvassed support on the basis that the result would be taken as a vote of confidence or of no confidence in its administration. And what a censure the result was!

Labor’s candidate, Mr WJ Scully, defeated the three endorsed Country Party candidates in a decisive manner. The voting gave Mr Scully an absolute majority of 2265.

_Local Government_

The Labor Party emerged from the general municipal and shire elections in December, 1937, with strong representation. Two of the most signal victories were in Paddington and Auburn.
In the former municipality, two candidates that had been endorsed by the ‘Industrialists’ opposed the selected Labor candidates in Middle ward. Under the leadership of Ald Thomas Whelan, the selected Labor candidates had a splendid victory.

For the first time in history, Auburn returned a full Labor Council. It was a tribute to the organisation that had been established and to the splendid record of service of the retiring alderman.

It might well be mentioned here that Ald WH Lamb, who won the Granville seat at the State elections on March 26, was one of those largely responsible for the Auburn municipal victory. It was a clear demonstration of the value of organisation and public service.

Another outstanding feature of the municipal poll was the election for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth of an Alderwoman as Mayor of a Municipality.

This is the unique and honorable position that is occupied by Alderwoman Mrs Fowler at Newtown. And at the by-election on April 2, necessitated by the death of Ald Roberts (Labor) Mrs M Swift, the selected Labor candidate, was successful. The movement is proud of the achievements of both these women stalwarts.

A determined effort was made by the party to capture control of the City Council at the general election. While an improved vote was secured, the Labor representation was not increased.

However, Labor exercises a strong influence in the civic government of the city. Every opportunity will be taken to extend that influence.

**Greater Newcastle**

On January 29, elections were held in connection with the Greater Newcastle scheme, under which a number of municipal councils were grouped.

The branches in the Newcastle Division took keen interest in the election and nominated a strong team of candidates. The arrangement of the wards and the franchise, which was the work of the Stevens Government, however, made a Labor victory very difficult indeed.

In the new council Labor is represented by Ald A McLagan (East Ward), Ald ERJ Peters and Dr R Pittar (West Ward).

**Branch Charters**

While the expulsion of JS Garden was made the immediate excuse for the launching of the ‘United Front’ attacks against the Labor Party, the position of the branches in the Botany and Marrickville electorates was used as the excuse for continuing these insidious activities after the Federal Executive had branded the August 1 conference as disruptive, and the movement that it represented as a deliberate attempt to smash the Labor Party.
The Federal Executive declared that the granting or withdrawal of charters to branches in the Botany and Marrickville electorates was a matter entirely for local autonomy determination by the NSW Executive of the ALP.

The State Executive conducted an exhaustive inquiry into the position of the branches in both these centres in a determined endeavour to bring about complete unity among the members.

Where the charters of old branches were withdrawn and new branches set up, the whole of the former members were invited to resume their membership, with full continuity and rights in the movement.

But what happened? In Marrickville, while the sitting member, Mr Lazzarini, resumed his membership in the movement, a group of members supporting Mr Lazzarini was organised to try and frustrate the work of the Central Executive.

The same thing happened in Botany. Mr Heffron resumed his membership in the party, but he continued to associate himself with disgruntled elements that had set themselves up as an organised body to defy the authority of the movement.

It was around these dissident factions that the ‘United Front’ campaign was continued or, at least, that was the excuse employed.

When it came to the selection ballots, both Mr Heffron and Mr Lazzarini submitted their nominations. But they withdrew these nominations when the ‘United Front’ party decided to carry its insidious campaign into the State election fight. The ‘Provisional Executive’ appointed Mr Heffron as the ‘leader’ of the ‘United Front’. Mr Lazzarini either became deputy-leader or the caucus.

Mr Orr, Dr Lloyd Ross, Mr Denford, Mr Garden and the Communist Party extended their active support to the ‘United Front’, but the new party came out of the election campaign only with its ‘leader’ and its caucus of one.

The only glory that it can claim is that it robbed the Labor Party of at least 10 seats and possibly of a Government. That is the position that faces the workers and it is a position that no unionist or member of the movement can quietly accept or ignore.

Country Conference

The Country Conference held at Parkes on February 26 was one of the most successful that has yet been held. The delegates dealt with the business in an expeditious and business-like manner and struck a splendid keynote on the eve of the State elections.

A fine reception was accorded the leader of the party, Mr Lang, and Mr JA Beasley, MHR, who addressed the gathering.

Keen appreciation was expressed by the visiting delegates at the manner in which the Parkes members had completed arrangements. A social function on the Saturday night was a huge success.
It is well to mention here that the proceeds from the function enabled the Parkes branch to pay in full for its shares in the Sunday Express.

**Metropolitan Conference**

Due to the intervention of the State election campaign, the Central Executive decided to abandon the Metropolitan Conference that was to have been held on March 5.

All agenda items forwarded by affiliated unions and branches have been placed upon the agenda for Annual Conference.

**1938 Executive**

A splendid vote of confidence was recorded in the retiring Central Executive members at the elections for the 1938 Executive. It was a striking indication of the manner in which the rank and file approved the work of the Executive during the past year and it was a renewal of the mandate to continue those activities.

The Land Transport group was reconstituted to include the AWU which had reaffiliated on 7000 members. While the president of the AWU, Mr CA Dalton, was elected as a member of the group, he resigned the position at the instigation of his union so that an appeal could be placed before Easter Conference on the question solely of whether the AWU was entitled to representation as a separate group.

The runner-up in this ballot, Mr J Hughes (ARU), automatically filled the vacancy.

It is with regret that we record the death in the early part of the year of Mr TH Mendham, who was one of the representatives of the West Central Division on the Executive.

The members of the Executive for the various groups are:

**Trade Union Groups**

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<td>Land Transport</td>
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Land Transport  J Hughes.
Water Transport  W Donnelly.
Wood  AJ Dowd.

Metropolitan Groups
No. 1  VF Christensen.
No. 2  AJ Murphy.
No. 3  PJ O’Grady.
No. 4  TO Johannessen.
No. 5  DL Rees.
No. 6  SG Gould.
No. 7  WC Burnett.
No. 8  SH Howie.

Country Divisions
Southern  GR Johnson.
Southern  LGE Moreman.
Northern  W Brown.
Northern  WH Read.
West Central  Mrs MA Edmonds.

Organisation
The organisational work of the party during the past 12 months has resulted not only in the formation of many new branches, but in the metropolitan workshops active committees have been formed to counteract the insidious propaganda of Labor’s enemies.

New branches were formed at Bingara, Temora, Spring Ridge, Finley, Baradine, Coonabarabran, Moree, Barmedman, Tuggerah Lakes, Kogarah Bay, Uralla, Jingellic, Deniliquin, Walgett, Abbotsford,Blakehurst, Lawson, Waverley South, Dumbleton, Manildra, Tottenham, Hay, Riverstone, Thornleigh, Nundle, Manilla, Barraba, North Parramatta, Daceyville, Waterloo, Jamberoo, East Tamworth and Epping.

In the railway workshops large and active committees have been formed at Eveleigh (Loco. side), Eveleigh (Car and Waggon Stores side), Clyde Waggon Works, Darling Harbour Goods Yard, Electric Car Shop (Chullora), Signal Branch (Chullora), and Enfield Loco.

The Central Railway ALP Committee is comprised of guards, ticket examiners and other grades of employees from Central and other stations in the metropolitan area.

A similar Central ALP Committee has been established in the Tramway service, while steps have now been taken to extend this form of organisation to other industries.

During the State election campaign these committees did splendid work. In addition, they are publishing journals that are providing a
means of expression for the rank and file that is not possible in their own organisations because of ‘United Front’ control.

The work that is being performed is of a practical character and it will assist materially in strengthening the position of the Labor Movement. It will weld the industrial and political wings still more firmly together.

**Future Plans**

Labor faces the future with a courage and determination that is undaunted. Its organisation in all electorates is sound and the membership has stood a test of loyalty greater than ever before imposed upon it.

No political organisation in the world has been able to maintain mass support as has the Labor Party in NSW, nor has any political organisation been subject to more vicious attacks.

The movement in NSW will continue to march forward. It will continue to exercise a greater influence in the government of the country and it will assume power despite all the sabotage directed against it.

There is much immediate work that will be undertaken and in which the loyal support of every member is required.

First of all, plans are well in hand for providing the movement with an official organ that will take up the work where it was suspended when the Labor Daily ceased to represent the Labor Movement.

In addition, the movement will continue to extend its influence in other directions, including the establishment of radio stations and other means of propaganda. These activities will all be coordinated to ensure their efficient use at all times on behalf of the people.

It is because its house is well in order that the Labor Party looks with complete confidence to the future, and it is fortified with the knowledge that the half-million people who stood with the party in the depth of the depression are steadily increasing their numbers and losing none of their determination to conquer oppression and misrepresentation.

**Appreciation**

This report would not be complete without a sincere expression of appreciation of the efforts and loyal cooperation of the staff throughout the year.

The movement also owes a debt of gratitude to those voluntary workers whose services are always at the disposal of the party. In fact, it is in this way that much of the real work of the movement is performed.

It is this spirit of sacrifice that demonstrates the depth of Labor’s cause and its tremendous appeal to the people. If it were otherwise, the Labor Movement would have been overwhelmed long ago. Instead its vast army is marching with greater determination than ever towards its objective.
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1938

(The Sydney Morning Herald, 16, 18, 19 April 1938)

Day 1, Friday, 15 April 1938


Delegates from all parts of the State attended the annual Easter conference of the State Labour Party, which opened in the Trades Hall yesterday. Many Federal and State Parliamentarians were on the platform. Mr P Keller, president of the ALP, was in the chair.

Tumultuous applause greeted Mr Lang when he arrived at the conference. For several minutes the business of the conference was interrupted while delegates sang “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”.

The attendance of five miners’ delegates was acclaimed as a victory for Mr Lang, as that union is one of the main anti-Lang bodies in the Labour movement.

In opening the conference Mr Keller said that statements had been made in the Press that it was the desire of the ALP to encourage non-unionists within its ranks.

“I say this is a deliberate lie”, said Mr Keller. “Such statements are in keeping with the malicious campaign now being conducted against us. I hope that this conference will give the lie direct to the people responsible for these statements. I hope this conference will declare where the ALP stands.”

Mr JJ Graves, MLC, general secretary of the ALP, in presenting the annual report and balance-sheet, gave a long explanation of every item on the balance-sheet. Mr Graves stated that ALP funds had often been criticised. The so-called inner group had been criticised. He told delegates that the executive officers of the party had nothing to hide. Any member of the party could inspect the books within office hours upon reasonable notice.

A long discussion took place on a motion from the Punchbowl branch that the Hospital and Asylum Employees’ Union should be given representation on the Hospitals Commission. The motion was carried.
**Bread-Baking Hours**

The conference carried a motion that the Factories and Shops Act should be amended to provide for a prohibition of the making or baking of bread, pastry, cakes, and biscuits except between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm on Mondays to Fridays, and 6 am to noon on Saturdays.

“That the next Labour Government make it compulsory for all bread to be properly wrapped before leaving the bakehouse for delivery to the public” were the terms of another motion carried.

“Our engineers at Newtown are now working a 36-hour week”, said Alderman Fowler, Mayor of Newtown, in moving that the next Labour Government should inaugurate a 30-hour week. “We are hoping that at Newtown eventually we will have a 30-hour week. It is the only solution of unemployment.”

The conference decided on a 40-hour-week.

**Homework of Schoolchildren**

“If you do not give the children homework they will turn up dunderheads”, said Mrs Rose (Newcastle) in opposing a motion that homework should be abolished. “A little homework will do no child any harm”.

Mr Walsh (Molong), in moving an amendment that homework should be restricted, said that if homework were abolished, pupils in public schools would be placed at a disadvantage. It had to be remembered that pupils in private schools indulged in excessive homework.

“The boys who do no homework are left hopelessly behind in life’s race”, said Mr Thomas (Postal Workers). “If you restrict education, you are playing into the hands of the wealthy. Fascism is based on ignorance. Hitler has succeeded only because he has exploited the ignorance of the workers. He does not give them homework to do. He sends them to labour camps instead.”

The amendment providing for the restriction of homework and the motion for the abolition of homework were both defeated. The conference also rejected a motion that a free library movement should be part of the Labour Party’s policy.

**Dispute About Delegates**

Five delegates from the Miners’ Federation were refused admission, and they were told that, before they could attend the conference as delegates, they would have to appear before the appeals committee.

It was explained that the delegates could not attend because their union secretary had not given the personnel of the Miners’ delegation to the ALP before the conference opened, in accordance with the rules. The
Alp NSW Annual Conference 1938

Delegates were subsequently admitted to the conference on the recommendation of the chairman of the appeals committee, Mr AW McNamara, MLC, who submitted the following report, which was carried unanimously:

“It was found by your committee that the reason why the secretary of the Northern Miners had not conveyed to the general secretary of the ALP the names of the delegates selected by the Northern Miners was because of shortage of time. Your committee found the credentials of Messrs W Simpson, Crook, Craig, Logan, and Bonar to be in order from the secretary and president of the union.

“In connection with the position of Mr Bonar, who was elected as a member of the provisional executive of the Communist United Front, Mr Bonar assured the committee that he was not now a member of the provisional executive of the Communist United Front having been withdrawn by resolution of his union, and that he was a pledged supporter of the Labour movement. Mr Bonar said that he had not at any time attended a meeting of the provisional executive, and could not attend a meeting unless he did so in opposition to the determination of his union. The other Miners’ delegates supported Mr Bonar’s statement that he had been withdrawn by his union, and that the Northern Miners had decided to support the Australian Labour Party, and to have no association with the Communist United Front.

“Your committee, therefore, recommends that badges of admission to the five delegates credentialled by the Northern Miners should be issued upon them signing the necessary pledge.”

Mr Lang Cheered

The report of Mr McNamara caused a stir at the conference. Lang supporters considered that they had achieved a victory when the delegates from the Miners walked into the conference after Mr McNamara’s report had been heard. It was said to be significant that five delegates from one of the main anti-Lang unions, of which Mr W Orr is secretary, should be anxious to take part in the proceedings.

Tumultuous applause greeted Mr Lang when he arrived at the conference. For several minutes the business of the conference was interrupted while delegates cheered and sang “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”.

A similar ovation was given to Mr Thorne, a member of the New Zealand Government, after he addressed the conference.

The conference decided to appeal to leagues and unions to provide funds to enable the defeated Labour candidate for Petersham, Mr W Sheehan, to challenge the result of the poll.

The motion was sponsored by the organising secretary, Mr JB Martin, MLC, who made many allegations regarding the conduct of the poll.
Day 2, Saturday, 16 April 1938


The Leader of the State Labour Party, Mr Lang, in his address to the annual conference of the party, which was held during the week-end, blamed Communist influences for the party’s failure in the recent State elections.

He foreshadowed a Commonwealth-wide conference, probably under the chairmanship of the Federal Labour Leader, Mr Curtin, to evolve plans for eradicating Communists from the Labour movement.

He announced that within a month a weekly Labour newspaper would be published in Sydney, and it would be the official organ of the movement. The present Labour paper and broadcasting station, he declared, were under the control of Communists.

The conference decided by an overwhelming majority that Mr Lang should continue to be leader of the party. His was the only nomination received for the position.

The Hand of Communism

Mr Lang, in his speech said the Labour party was in office in the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia during the depression, and the anti-Labour parties had been in office during the six years of improving conditions. The newspapers had branded the Labour party as the party of depression. “There were all sorts of suggestions as to how the position was to be met”, he said. “Some wanted to change the leader of the party. That had been tried in the Commonwealth, Victoria, and South Australia, but it had no effect. Some thought the party should move further to the left. South Australia had almost achieved the united front, but their position had not improved. Other sections of the party had proclaimed that they were moderates, but this had not solved the problem.

Lessons of Elections

Mr Lang said that the party had to profit by lessons of the recent State elections. “Several electorates had been lost by narrow majorities, but better organisation would have changed the position. In some of these our organisation and propaganda was sabotaged by the conduct of a so-called Industrial Party, which nullified to a certain extent the work put into the winning electorates”, he said. “This disruption must be dealt
with by the Labour movement. It is organised Communist infiltration that is proceeding throughout the Commonwealth.”

Mr Lang referred to the position of the ARU, and asked whether there was an occasion on which the secretary, Mr Lloyd Ross, had not been continually attacking the ALP, and he said that hundreds of members of the union had walked out of the organisation. These people should remain within and fight.

“During the struggle to gain control of the Labour newspaper”, he said, “many of the Industrialists fought side by side with Communists. While they have admitted this position they claimed that after they had secured control of the paper, they would elbow the Communists out.

“They did obtain control of the Labour newspaper, and there has been an elbowing out, but not of the Communist Party. If you want to know what interest the Labour newspaper now serves don’t go looking among the directors. Get a copy of a frankly Communist paper, and compare its contents with that of the so-called Labour newspaper. You will find they are following identical lines.”

“The Hand of Death”

Communism brings turmoil in its train. The unions that are now under Communist control are in the throes of internecine strife and disintegration, for instance the Miners’ Federation.

“The hand of Communism is the hand of death. It destroys everything it touches. Wherever the Labour party has agreed to a united front with Communism, Fascism is in control.

“The fight against the Communists has to be taken up on a Commonwealth wide basis by the Labour party. Every Communist influence has to be eradicated.”

Broadcasting Plans

Mr Lang said that the proposal to publish an official Labour weekly newspaper had been carefully considered. It was expected that publication would be commenced within a month. The Sunday newspaper would not be published immediately. The party’s broadcasting plans included the making of arrangements for regular broadcasts on a State-wide basis. The purchase of additional stations was also under consideration.

Mr Lang was loudly cheered at the conclusion of his address when he forecast a Labour victory at the next Federal elections.

Mr Forde, MP, who spoke after Mr Lang, said the Labour Party in Queensland had been bitterly assailed by the Communists in the recent State election. But it had taken effective measures to prevent the whitewashing of the movement.
It was unfortunate that the Labour Party had not won the Senate elections in South Australia because this would have given Labour control of the Senate.

Mr Forde expressed his concurrence with the proposal to fight Communism, and said that the Federal Parliamentary party would cooperate in action to secure a Labour broadcasting station in every State.

Dealing with Australian defence, he said the Labour party stood for adequate defence. Side by side with this, however, the party insisted that the living standards of the people had to be improved and no provocative trade diversion policies had to be put into effect. The Labour Party was also definitely opposed to the manufacture of arms and munitions by private enterprise. This work must be undertaken by the nation in order to stop profiteering in the instruments of war.

Mr Beasley, MP, made a vigorous attack upon the Industrialists. He said that it was because of their influence in the recent State elections that the Labour Party had failed to win a number of additional seats. He was confident that the Federal Parliamentary Party would cooperate with New South Wales in its efforts to drive the Communist influence out of the movement.

**Ruling on Foreign Policy**

There was a stormy scene during the Saturday afternoon session when the president ruled out of order motions from the Waverley branch and the ARU seeking a declaration of the party’s attitude to the position in Spain and the Far East, a boycott on Japanese goods, and restriction of exports of iron ore to Japan.

The president ruled that these were matters for a Federal conference to deal with, and were outside the scope of any State branch of the party.

Mr R Byers (Amalgamated Engineers) dissented from the ruling. His motion was defeated in the voices.

The president also ruled out of order a motion moved by Mr R Johnson (Ironworkers) which sought to amend the rules embracing the admission of financial unionists to the party. Mr Johnson’s motion sought to remove the responsibility from branches of deciding which was the *bona fide* union covering a prospective member’s calling.

During this discussion Mr L Kable (ARU) said that several hundred members had resigned from the ARU and the Ironworkers’ Association. These members would be debarred membership in the ALP unless they had the right to join any other *bona fide* union.

Mr F Craig (Northern Miners) referred during the debate to a threat to expel a number of Lang supporters from the rebel unions. He said he did not stand for victimisation of any kind, and he would address meetings on the northern coalfields in opposition to any such proposal.
**ARU Motion Repudiated**

Amusement was caused when the delegates from the ARU repudiated a motion submitted by their union expressing no confidence in Mr Lang and Mr Beasley. The motion lapsed.

On a further motion from the ARU calling for the closing of the ranks of the party and establishing unity, Mr Craig, the Northern Miners’ delegate, moved an amendment to set up a committee to confer with the industrialists.

Mr Craig said he did not want to be misunderstood in his action. He had no time for the Communists but he believed that some action should be taken to bridge the disunity in the trade unions. Both the motion and the amendment were rejected.

Mr McGrath (Redfern Boilermakers) said the members of his union had recently taken a greater interest in the organisation’s affairs and had reversed decisions to support the industrialists.

**Firemen’s Demands**

Delegates evinced considerable surprise at the session on Saturday night when the secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, Mr J McNamara, declared that the firemen would go on strike unless they secured a 56 hours’ week.

If the firemen went on strike and anything serious happened, the onus would be on the Government, Mr McNamara said.

It was stated that an application for a deputation had been made to the Premier. It was also expected that the Board of Fire Commissioners would give a decision in the matter tomorrow.

On the motion of Mr J Stewart (Electrical Trades) the conference pledged its support to the firemen.

A motion that the constitution of the Water Board should be amended to provide for representation of employees was carried by a large majority.

A motion that a socialisation educational committee similar to that of 1930-33 should be set up lapsed. “We do not want anything more like that”, said one delegate.

**Labour in New Zealand**

During the session Mr Robertson, a member of the New Zealand Parliament, addressed the conference. He said that in New Zealand Labour had been a long time gaining power but now that it was in it looked like staying a long time.

“We had great difficulty in getting a Government owing to the fact that most of our seats are rural”, he added.
He complained that little New Zealand news was sent to Australia. “Most of it is obviously from a politically tainted source at that”, he added.

The conference decided to convey fraternal greetings to the New Zealand Labour Party through Mr Robertson who is one of the first New Zealand Labour members of Parliament.

**Free Fight at Labour Conference Hall. Critic of Mr Lang Attacked.**

The concluding stages of the State Labour Party conference last night were marked by a free fight which developed in the corridors outside the conference hall.

One delegate to the conference who criticised Mr Lang was attacked, and two others were thrown down the steps.

One union president who is associated with the Industrialists was punched, and left the hall with his face bleeding. Some of the men were described as “muscle men”.

It was stated last night that the Miners Federation and other unions intended to call for an investigation of the attacks.

*Report in The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday, 19 April 1938*

**Labour party strife. Inner Group’s Plan. “Capture” of Unions. Industrialists’ Charges.**

According to the leaders of the Industrialists and Trades Hall officials, the State ALP ‘Inner Group’ proposes to launch an immediate State-wide campaign to capture all official positions in trade union organisations.

The leader of the political section of the Industrialists, and ‘rebel’ ALP members, Mr Heffron, MLA, said last night that Mr Lang, at the Easter conference of the State ALP, had said that “the hand of the Communists was the hand of death”.

But Mr Lang had forgotten to say that the hand of Lang was the hand of death to the Scullin Government, to two State Labour Governments, and to a number of prospective Labour Governments.

**Reply to Mr Lang**

Mr Heffron said last night that Mr Lang’s charges that the defeat of Labour at the last State general elections was due to the disruption of the Industrialists, and Communists were not true.

“Perhaps Mr Lang will give some reasons for the consistent failure of Labour at many other elections when he has led the Labour Party to ignominious defeat”, he said. “Perhaps he will explain the necessity for
the assassination of the Scullin Government, and why, during Mr Lang’s 16 years of leadership, Labour has been in office for only three and a half years, The Premier, Mr Stevens, no doubt supplied the answer to these questions on the eve of the last election, when he said ‘Mr Lang is the Government’s best asset’.

“The latest move by the ‘Inner group’ to disrupt the membership of the trade unions, by inducing members to resign from their organisations, and also by attempting to capture the official positions in the unions, will fail, just as did its attempt to disrupt the Miners’ Federation, and other large industrial organisations.”

Industrialists and leaders of the ‘rebel’ movement have decided to organise the unions with the object of counteracting the alleged ‘Inner group’ move.

**Meeting Tonight**

A meeting of delegates from various industrial organisations has been called for tonight at the Trades Hall, when the decisions of the recent State ALP annual conference will be reviewed, and arrangements made for a counter conference to be held on June 25.

Intervention by the Federal Labour Party may be again sought by a section of Industrial leaders in an attempt to end the faction strife.

An important trade union conference has also been convened for April 30 in Sydney, when matters affecting the welfare of workers generally will be discussed. It was stated yesterday that discussion of the faction fight would not be permitted at this meeting. Among the items on the agenda are: national insurance, hours of work, unity in the Industrial Labour movement, the Pan-Pacific trade union conference, Labour’s attitude towards the Commonwealth Government’s defence plans, improvement of the trade union organisations, and workers’ compensation.

The official journal of the Miners’ Federation, which was issued at the weekend, refers to alleged action by the State ALP ‘inner group’ to capture the trade unions.

“The ‘Inner group’ of the Labour Party in New South Wales”, it states, “has travelled far since its representatives stumped the coalfields in a vain attempt to induce members of the Miners’ Federation to appoint the ALP ‘Inner group’ heelers to the leading executive positions of the organisation.

“Rebuilding the unions, according to the ideas of the ‘Inner group’, is to undermine the leadership of the various industrial organisations, split the ranks on sectarian and political grounds, and stimulate resignations, and the formation of bogus unions.”