CHAPTER 4
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference, 15 – 23 April 1927

Report in The Sydney Morning Herald

The State Executive elected at the Annual Conference of 1926 was a complete disaster. President WH Seale (Waterside Workers) continued the factional control of the Willis coalition of unions, even after Magrath and Tyrrell were pushed out of the Executive because they were members of the Upper House. At the same time the AWU had a strong representation on the Executive, (including the positions of secretary Carey and vice-president Conroy) and could normally marshall a majority of votes against president Seale and his supporters.

The two factions in the Executive could not even agree on the date for the 1927 Conference, with each group planning to hold its own. The Easter Conference of 1927 was an initiative of the minority Seale section and was generally boycotted by AWU supporters and rural MPs. After the Annual Conference of April 1926 and the Special Conference of November 1926 the Conroy opposition section issued a report condemning the ‘Red Rules’ that had been proposed in 1926. This pamphlet, “Reasons Why Red Rules Should Not Be Adopted”, can be found in the TD Mutch papers in Mitchell Library (MLMSS 426). The Conroy-AWU faction wanted the Conference postponed till after the Federal Conference, and were proposing a June date for the State Conference. In the event the June Conference was never convened, with the AWU confident (wrongly, as it transpired) that Federal intervention would favour their cause. The Easter Conference expelled the Conroy-AWU group in the “bogus” Executive. The rump Conroy Executive had already expelled Seale and his supporters from the party for convening the Easter Conference against a majority vote of the Executive.

By 1927 Lang was in trouble with his Caucus, especially with the revolt of a number of country MPs led by PF Loughlin (Cootamundra), VW Goodin (Murray) and RT Gillies (Byron) who were unhappy with his alliance with Trades Hall industrialists, the attempted infiltration of the party by ‘reds’, and his rejection of the AWU. In order to pacify the country MPs Lang had reluctantly agreed to a ‘Goodin-Gillies pact’ that
was aimed at breaking the link between Lang and the radicals who supported him. This pact was one of the main items of business at this Conference. The pact ultimately was not acceptable to Lang as it would have left him defenceless against his enemies in the party. Soon after the Easter Conference, he resigned his Government in order to stack his new administration (his ‘Scabinet’, as his enemies called it) with his remaining supporters. The NSW party was split comprehensively at all levels.

The Easter Conference is notorious in Labor Party history for ratifying the ‘Red Rules’ that made future domination of the party by the AWU almost impossible. For the AWU and the daily press the new rules entrenched the power of ‘Reds’ in the party, but that was a beat-up; the 1926 Conference, with the full support of Lang and Willis, had denied access to the party for Communists, and this Easter Conference reaffirmed that strongly on the insistence of Lang. The other contentious decision of this 1927 Conference was to endorse taking the election of the parliamentary Leader (that is, Lang) away from Caucus and giving it to Conference, thus effectively to the Executive. Lang’s enemies labeled this as the ‘Lang dictatorship’. That term was justified, since it made Lang secure from challenge – even when members of Caucus opposed him – until the end of the 1930s.

Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1926

There does not seem to have been an official Executive Report for the year 1925-26. It is missing from the otherwise comprehensive collections for those years in the Mitchell and National Libraries. Its absence should not be surprising since the Executive was hopelessly split between the Conroy group defending the interests of the AWU which controlled a majority of the members of the Executive, and the Seale group which occupied the key position of President. The Unity Conference later in 1927 confirmed the Seale faction – supporting Lang – in power, leaving the majority Executive without legitimacy to produce a Report to the 1928 Conference.
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1927
(The Sydney Morning Herald, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25 April 1927)

Day 1, Friday, 15 April 1927

Labour Conference Opens. ALP Executive Attacked.
Mr F Conroy and Mr W Carey Suspended.

The Conference of the Australian Labour Party convened by Mr WH Seale, opened at the Trades Hall yesterday morning.

Those present included the Lord Mayor (Alderman Mostyn), the vice-president of the Executive Council (Mr AC Willis), Mr Lazzarini, MP, and Messrs Stuart-Robertson, Horsington, Stokes, M Burke, F Burke, Lysaght, WJ Ratcliffe, MA Davidson, Gosling, and Tonge, MsLA.

It is estimated that about 300 delegates were present. There was a large attendance of visitors, the public portion of the hall being crowded.

Mr Seale, in his presidential address, criticised the members of the majority section of the ALP Executive for refusing to support him in convening the Conference for Easter. The Conference subsequently decided to suspend from office for three years Mr F Conroy, who was elected president by the ALP Executive, Mr W Carey, MLC, general secretary, the assistant secretary (Mr W Gibbs), and the other members of the majority section.

The Premier, Mr Lang, in an address to the Conference last night, declared that one of the principal planks of the government’s platform at the next elections would be the abolition of the Legislative Council.

The militants captured most of the official positions.

The Conference also gave Mr Lang authority to reconstruct his Cabinet, and declared null and void the selection of Captain Conway for Warringah.

Mr ER Voigt was appointed minute secretary. Mr J Beasley, president of the Labour Council, was appointed senior vice-president of the Conference, and Mr J O’Reilly (Hairdressers) junior vice-president. Mr A Bennett (Coachmakers) was elected timekeeper. The election of the agenda committee resulted as follows: Messrs R Bates (Eastern Suburbs), C Treflé (Eastern Suburbs), J Graves (Stovemakers), F Roels (Engine-drivers), and R James (Northern Miners).

During the afternoon the Premier, Mr Lang, attended the Conference, and was given a rousing reception.

The afternoon session was devoted principally to the presidential address of Mr Seale, the text of which was as follows:
“Intrigue and Trickery!”

The annual Conference meets today under unique circumstances, owing to the refusal of a band of usurpers to deliver the office keys. The so-called dispute in the ranks of the Executive was forced upon the president and his supporters similarly to, and currently with, the dispute forced upon Mr Lang, the Labour Premier, by a section of the caucus. Both these factions, warring with the leaders in the Executive and political fields, are actuated by the same motives, have the same common understanding, and follow the same discreditable methods.

Their rank treachery to the movement that created them is self-apparent when their company is analysed. Not only have they the solid support of virulent anti-Labour organs, but they are also held in idolatrous respect by The Worker, which long since ceased to function as a Labour paper.

The evil factions within the two Executive bodies of the Labour movement have conducted squalid intrigues with expelled members of the PLP and the ALP Executive. It was by the treachery of some of these expelled persons that the Premier was double-crossed in his magnificent attempt to abolish the Upper House and all it stands for. But for that low-down treachery the Labour Government would have been enabled to serve the people in much greater measure than it has done, great as have been its performances and its efforts.

**Internecine Strife**

When Peter Loughlin exploded his midnight bomb, and started the Parliamentary disruption, the present majority faction of the ALP Executive endeavoured to block the special Conference being held. The Conroy-McGarry group could not conceal their ardent support for the treacherous Loughlin faction and all it stood for and implied. The same group worked gleefully hand in hand with the Loughlin-Goodin-Gillies malcontents, and were in no wise abashed when their friends brought about the defeat of the Labour Government on the floor of the Assembly on Bavin’s move for leave to launch a censure motion.

The Conroy-McGarry faction were active throughout the negotiations with the caucus traitors, whereby these were able to impose conditions that have never been revealed, and are supposed still to lie somewhere.

It was on December 17 last year that the Executive received a letter from Mr O’Halloran, secretary to the PLP, intimating an agreement with Gillies and Goodin, but setting out none of the conditions thereof.

The president was threatened with deposition for standing in the way of the plot to defeat the new rules drawn up by a committee appointed for that purpose by the last annual Conference. Mr Seale’s ruling that
the motion for a “rump” rules committee was not in order, was dissent
ed from, and the president duly declared the committee so appointed
bogus, in a statement to the Labor Daily.

This bogus rules committee, appointed to override the work of the
duly appointed Conference committee, became the medium whereby a
set of bogus rules were drawn up and printed at heavy expense to the
ALP – a set of rules worthy of their creators, and designed to further
crook work, the faction spirit, and corruption to an extent greater than
the existing old rules.

The Red Cry

The excuse for all this was that the new rules expressly designed to
obstruct crook work, are “red rules”. The new rules annoyed Jack Bailey
and his henchmen – hence the scare-cry of “red” – a worn-out Nationalist
shibboleth with the use of which alleged “Labour” men hoped to
stampede the rank and file. Merely showing how much they are out of
touch with the movement they desire to use for their personal ends.

The further amendment of the Electoral Act, made necessary to
nullify Goodin and Gillies, was seized on as a pretext to postpone the
Conference till June 4 – a prelude to never. By further specious pretexts,
the gang of usurpers would have “guided” the destinies of our move-
ment indefinitely. No Conference could have been held on June 4, even if
the conspirators were willing, as the Executive holds no power to alter
rule 21 without the annual Conference’s sanction. “This rule specifically
provides that the new basis of representation under single seats must be
fixed by Conference and incorporated in the form of a new rule. There-
fore, no Executive, even if unanimous, could effect the change”.

Had Mr Seale not called this Conference, and the Conroy-McGarry
faction been left in control, they would have allied themselves more
closely than ever with the Loughlin faction, which still persists in caucus,
despite the proven treachery of its ringleader. This would have meant the
deposition of Mr Lang from the leadership, a “rump” factionist Ministry
in control, and the men and women of the movement denied all rights of
preselection. Mr Loughlin would have been graciously pardoned, and
Mr Bailey granted absolution.

The Junee Case

Obviously, the “rump” Executive conspired to protect parliamentary
malcontents and disruptionists against an annual Labour Conference.
The treatment of the Junee branch is a case in point, and one which must
be placed on record in protest against the disruptionists both in the
Executive and Caucus. That branch was picked on because of its
steadfast loyalty to the Lang Government, and a bogus branch started in
opposition, the object being to bolster a parliamentary tyro because of his intriguing value to the “rump”, and to the caucus malcontents.

The Conroy-McGarry Executive fell down on its job when Prime Minister Bruce appointed Mr E Grayndler to an industrial delegation travelling to the United States. This alleged Labour Executive prevented the Grayndler business being discussed or any protest resolution being adopted. They suppressed the highest important matter carrying so much at stake where first principles are concerned.

In this they were merely carrying out their general policy of suppression where the interests of the movement are concerned. This Conference asks that our protest be placed on record concerning the high-handed action of these usurpers in suppressing the report of the genuine Conference rules committee and in spending a large sum of ALP money in circulating the bogus rules committee decision and in having printed scurrilous leaflets and pamphlets worthy of the infamous blue pamphlet, all aimed at the solidarity of the movement.

The Conference also draws the movement’s attention to the fact that the leading schismatics in the caucus and on the Executive have found neither time nor opportunity during the past-two years of attacking the Nationalists, all their energies being focussed on creating internecine disruption. Mr Loughlin has not said one harsh word against Nationalists for five years, and there are others equally inoffensive where the enemy is concerned.

Mr Seale criticised in strong terms the attitude adopted by the majority section of the ALP Executive, with regard to the attempt of Mr Loughlin to oust Mr Lang from the Premiership. He explained that when he objected to the pact reached with Messrs Goodin and Gillies, he was again threatened with deposition from the presidency.

Mr Seale described the opponents of the Easter Conference as traitors, and said that it was never their intention to hold a Conference. He said that there was something sinister in the move to postpone the date of the Conference – something which did not appear on the surface. The objective of the Conference was to deal with the question of reducing the possibilities of opportunists within the movement. The present constitution provided a fertile field for the schemes of opportunists and schemers. Mr Seale denied that the outcome of the Conference would be the formation of a new party. The Labour Government had been rendered impotent by its opponents in the Labour party, and the Conference should put an end to it. “I hope the Conference will put the people responsible for this state of affairs in their right place”, concluded Mr Seale amidst applause.

Mr Beasley submitted the following motion: “That this Conference affirms the decision of the last annual Conference respecting the date of the Conference, and congratulates the president upon his loyalty to the Conference, to the constitution, and to the rank and file, and further
endorses his action in receiving moneys from the branches, councils, and affiliated unions, and using them in financing this Conference, and for other purposes therewith.” Mr Beasley, in moving the motion, said that the party was entering on a new era.

The motion was seconded by Mrs Green, and carried unanimously.

On the motion of Mr J O’Reilly (Hairdressers), a vote of welcome to Mr Lang was carried.

Suspension Motion

An animated debate followed the submission by Mr T Falkingham (Boilermakers) of the following motion:

“The Conference debars Messrs F Conroy, W Carey, J McGarry, T Holloway, G Sutherland, L Devitt, L O’Neill, W Harrop, F Parker, S Taylor, J Jaine, T Liston, G Anderson, G Rowlands, R Beashell, J Comans, W Gibbs, W Terry, R Tatham, J Bodkin, Mrs Dorrington, and Mrs Benson from holding office within the Australian Labour Party for a period of three years, in view of their treacherous and unconstitutional action in persistently violating rule 20, 21, and 68 of the old rules, as well as the definite decision of the last annual Conference, and such suspension shall not be raised except by an annual Conference.”

Mr Falkingham said that if he were dealing individually with the people named he would not give them the consideration they received in the resolution. The resolution did not lop any heads off – it merely handcuffed the people so that they could not put their hands into the pockets of members any longer. Mr Thompson (Ashfield), seconding the motion, heatedly accused Mr Conroy of being “the greatest Judas in the Labour movement”. Mr Mills (Waterside Workers) said that the Conference would not be acting constitutionally if it did not give the persons named a hearing. “They should be summoned to the Conference, and if they refused to do so they should be penalised. If they were adjudged guilty they should be expelled.”

Mr G Smith appealed to the Conference for leniency in the case of Mr S Taylor, whom he said, had voted with the majority section of the Executive under a misapprehension and had since regretted his mistake. Mr T Leslie (Miners) suggested that the name of Mr W Gibbs, assistant secretary of the ALP, should be added to the list of suspended persons. “If you are going to string one, string the lot”, said Mr Leslie amid applause.

The Conference, however, did not add the name of Mr Gibbs, in view of the fact that Mr Gibbs was a paid servant of the Party and not an executive officer.

Mr Green (Eastern Suburbs) moved as amendment that the persons named should be expelled from membership for three years, and suspended from holding any office in the party for another three years.
Mr Taylor was then given leave to address the Conference. He stated that he had opposed the Easter Conference owing to a misunderstanding.

**Mr Lang’s Address**

When the evening session commenced at 7 o’clock, the Premier, Mr Lang, delivered his address, which was as follows:

“This great Conference is manifestly representative of the organised Labour party in this State, and I regret that a minority, however sincere and well meaning, should continue to take up an exclusive attitude towards the rank and file. Every Labour member and every official of our party owe their public existence to the men and women who have sent their delegates here today, and it is manifestly playing the ostrich to pretend that this Conference is not representative, or that it lacks authority.

“Perhaps the most important question which this Conference will discuss will be the rules drafted by the committee appointed by the last Conference, and referred to the unions and leagues for suggestions. On this question I think the parliamentarians must give way to the rank and file, although it is clearly the duty of every sound Labourite to assist in making the rules of the movement an efficient instrument. It is recognised that for some years the serious business of the annual Conference has been gravely hampered by the clumsy machinery designed years ago, and now admitted to require drastic amendment. I hope that the outcome of free discussion will be a set of rules making for the better management of our internal affairs, and for the abolition of cliqueism and factions.

“One thing the delegates must make clear – that no member of the Nationalist or Communist party shall be allowed to appear as a representative of Labour on the Executive, or at our Conferences. Labour has its own platform, and welcomes recruits from all other parties, but no one should be allowed to masquerade as a representative Labourite unless his *bona fides* are assured. We should welcome every honest convert to our principles, but beware of treachery and duplicity. The Communists, in particular, do not believe in any of Labour’s methods of political or economic reform, and can find no place within the Labour movement.

**Government’s Work**

“I suppose many of you expected things from our last Session’s work which you have not received”, continued Mr Lang. “The Family Endowment Bill, for one thing, is far from what the Government want; but I would like the Conference and the public to know that it is
absolutely the best we could squeeze for the movement from the magnan-
imious patriots who control the destinies of this State from the security
and peace of the most reactionary objectionable and indolent nominee
House in the Empire. These honourable gentlemen have quite confi-
dently taken upon themselves the right to turn Labour legislation into
Nationalist legislation, and to dictate to the Government the laws which
shall be passed, and the laws that shall not be passed.

“I think when you calmly review the position of the Government
with its narrow majority and powerful enemies, you will admit that it
has proved the best Labour Government this State has enjoyed. All the
big industrial and land reforms I promised we have honestly
attempted to carry out, and some of these successfully achieved place New South
Wales in the van of progressive nations. Where we have failed to get
what we wanted, the fault has lain either with defects in the constitution
or in the obstructive tactics of the capitalist press, and the nominee
Chamber.

**Legislative Council**

“Although the Government has had a very busy time attending to the
work in Parliament and in the departments, finance has occupied a
considerable amount of my time for months, because without sound
State finance economic reforms are impossible.

“I think we have travelled the hardest part of the financial journey,
and can look forward with confidence to the future. Our credit stands
high in the money markets of the world and even Mr Bavin has been
compelled to admit that the State’s finances are in a sound and healthy
condition.

“The Cinderallas of the country are the wage-earners, the small
farmers, and the small tradesmen who have to fight strenuously to make
ends meet. Labour is not worrying about the millionaires or near
millionaires. The job of the Labour movement is to see that the wealth
earned by the community is distributed with reasonable fairness and
justice.

“I should like to impress upon delegates that Labour can never hope
to realise its highest ambitions while the nominee Council remains to
censor, mutilate, and veto important legislation. One of the great fights
before us is the abolition of that Chamber, standing as it does for privi-
lege, vested interests, and big finance. It has lost all semblance of impar-
tiality and independence, and become the veriest tool of capitalism.

“We must stake everything at the next elections on the abolition of the
Legislative Council”, Mr Lang declared, amidst applause.
Reconstruction of Cabinet

Mr D Clyne (Storemen and Packers) moved the following motion, which was carried unanimously:

“In view of the unsatisfactory situation existing in the State Cabinet, and the disloyalty of members of that Cabinet to the Conference and to the Premier, the Conference confirms the decision of the previous Conference giving the Premier power inter alia to reconstruct his Cabinet, and instructs the Premier forthwith to proceed with a reconstruction of the Cabinet in the interests of the working class”.

Mr Clyne added that while the Conference appreciated the humane legislation passed by the Lang Government, better results would have been obtained if there had been unanimity in the Cabinet. The Labour movement was disappointed at the non-declaration of the basic wage, and at the child endowment scheme. Child endowment should be supplementary to the basic wage, not a substitute for it.

Criticising the Upper Chamber, Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers’ Union) declared that there was danger of Australia becoming as decadent as the old country. The trouble with Parliament, he said, was that it did not really govern. “Mr Lang is captian of the team, but what a team”, he added, amidst laughter.

Mr A Bennett (Coachmakers’ Union) said that any man who placed his position before the movement had no right to be in the Labour party. To secure unanimity it was necessary to get rid of the cause of disruption, which was to be found among some of the members of the Labour party in Parliament. They should be kept from active participation in the party in future.

Executive Members Suspended

The debate on the question of the suspension of the members of the majority section of the ALP Executive was then continued.

Acknowledging that he had made a mistake, Mr Taylor (Ryde) made an explanation regarding the charges made against him. Several members spoke urging that leniency be extended to Mr Taylor, whose only crime, they said, was that he sat on the fence instead of “going over it” as the others did.

Mr F Parker (Brick, Tile & Pottery Union) said that he had no apologies to offer as he was satisfied he was doing the right thing when he voted in favour of the June Conference.

A further amendment was moved that the name of Mr Taylor should be deleted from the list of suspended persons, and that he should be censured for his action. Both amendments were lost, and the motion suspending the members was carried.
Election of Executive
The Conference agreed to the recommendation of the agenda committee that the nominations for the new Executive should close on Monday night, and that the ballot should close at 10 pm on Wednesday. Mr Martin (Clerks) was elected returning officer.

Warringah By-Election
Mr Norman (Manly) submitted the following motion: “That this Conference declares the selection of Captain Conway as the endorsed Labour candidate for Warringah by-election null and void, and instructs the new Executive to permit the leagues to select a candidate in accordance with the rules and regulations of the party”.

In seconding the resolution, Mr White (North Sydney) said that the leagues in the electorate had not been given an opportunity by the “rump” Executive to select a candidate. The resolution was carried.

The Loughlin Case
Mr A Rutherford (Saddlers) moved that, in view of their action in violating their pledges and fighting against the Labour Government, the Conference declined to accept the resignation of Mr Loughlin, and hereby expelled Messrs Loughlin, Goodin, and Gillies from the Labour party.

Mr Rutherford said that Messrs Goodin and Gillies were prepared at all costs to destroy the legislation of the Government. They had put themselves outside the ambit of the Executive.

Mr C Baines (Liquor Trades) opposed the motion, because, he said, if it was passed the Government would cease to function at a time when it had important legislation to put through.

Mr A Bennett (Coachmakers) stated that he would rather see the Government defeated than be obliged to submit to the proposals laid down by “renegades” like Messrs Loughlin, Goodin and Gillies. He declared that at the recent Bathurst conference Mr Loughlin went there, not in the interests of Mr Lang, but to consolidate his position with the Country Labour party.

Mr J O’Reilly (Hairdressers) warned the Conference not to become intoxicated with their new unity. The time to deal with Messrs Goodin and Gillies had been when they defected, and not the present when it meant that the Lang Government would go to the country with a big possibility of defeat. There was very vital legislation to be put through with the resumption of the session, and it would be very foolish to have an election forced at this juncture. The electorate would deal with Messrs Gillies and Goodin.

At this stage the debate was adjourned until this morning.
Day 2, Saturday, 17 April 1927


The Conference of the ALP which has been convened by Mr Seale on Saturday decided to expel Messrs Loughlin, Gillies and Goodin, MsLA, from the Labour Party. The voting was 184 in favour of expulsion and 31 against.

The agreement with the Labour Government recently entered into by Messrs Gillies and Goodin was declared bogus. The Conference also demanded the production forthwith of the terms of the pact.

The opinion expressed by many delegates was that in consequence of the expulsion the Ministry would lose its majority in the Legislative Assembly, and that an early election would follow.

The Conference

Mr Seale (State secretary of the Waterside Workers’ Union) again presided on Saturday when the Conference was resumed.

It was asserted at the Conference that the Premier had made the statement that he was prepared to go to the country at an early date.

Mr Voigt (private secretary to Mr Willis, Vice-President of the Executive Council) caused a sensation when he declared that the Goodin-Gillies pact with the Labour Government contained a provision that both Mr Willis and himself should be sacrificed.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, vigorously denied the allegation.

Mr Voigt also contended that the Government was in the control of two Labour “rats”. And further, that he personally had been victimised by the State Cabinet.

Amongst those seated on the platform were Mr Willis (Vice-President of the Executive Council), Messrs Stuart-Robertson, Davidson (Government Whip), and Lysaght, Tonge, and Keegan, MsLA.

Bout of Fisticuffs

The early proceedings of the night sitting were interrupted by a bout of fisticuffs between two men who had moved from the hall to the doorway.

When calm had been restored the chairman (Mr Seale) asserted that the interruption of the proceedings was due to the tactics of their opponents who desired to see the Conference a failure.

Later in the proceedings another fight occurred in the doorway.

Mr Bennett (a delegate) said that a complaint had been made to him that the enemy camp had conspired with one of the doorkeepers to break
up the Conference. In view of the repeated disturbances he asked that an
inquiry should be held to ascertain whether there was any truth in the
allegation:

The chairman: Produce the doorkeeper!

One of the doorkeepers, on being brought forward, was warned by
the chairman that he was to refrain from creating any further trouble or
disturbance.

**Legal Proceedings Threatened**

Mr Seale (chairman) said that the so-called ALP Executive had issued
summonses upon secretaries of various branches of the ALP, including
the Paddington and Darlinghurst branches.

The Conference decided that all branch secretaries of the ALP should
be instructed not to hand over any branch books or papers to anyone
other than Mr Seale (president of the Conference). Further, that Mr Seale
should be directed to take any necessary steps or other means to protect
the branch secretaries in regard to the retention of books and documents,
and that the trustees of the Conference should act with the president.

Another delegate announced that the Leichhardt branch had also
received a summons.

The secretary to the Darlinghurst branch said that he would never
hand over the books to the bogus ALP Executive, even if he had to go to
Long Bay gaol.

Mr Padgen (minority ALP Executive member) said that the Con-
ference trust account was in credit to the extent of £1000.

**Alleged Violation of Pledges**

The Conference resumed the debate on the motion of Mr A Rutherford
(Saddlers) that the Conference should decline to accept the resignation of
Mr Loughlin, MLA, but should expel him from the Labour party,
together with Messrs Goodin and Gillies, MsLA, in view of their “treason-
able” action, in violating their solemn pledges and voting against the
Labour Government.

Mr McNamara moved an amendment to the effect that the Confer-
ence should decline to accept the resignation of Mr Loughlin, but
should expel him from the party, further, that Messrs Gillies and Goodin,
MsLA, be instructed to withdraw the demands contained in the so-called
pact, and in the event of their refusal to withdraw, the matter be left to
the incoming Executive to expel them for a breach of their pledges and
party discipline.

The mover said that his desire was to prevent the possibility of an
early State general election. If an election were held immediately, it
would be disastrous to the movement in view of the present state of affairs.

Mr JP Byrne seconded the amendment.

Mr M Ryan (Storemen and Packers) contended that the Labour Government at the present time was impotent, and had been strangled.

He supported the original motion.

Mr George Burn opposed the original motion. He said that there was something more important than the expulsion of Messrs Gillies and Goodin. One of the chief objectives of the Labour party was the abolition of the Upper House. If these two members walked across the floor of the House Mr Bavin would be sent for by the Governor and asked to form a Nationalist Government. Mr Bavin would then bring in a bill to bring about an elective Upper House. It would not be elected on an adult franchise, but by a property franchise, similar to the law in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia.

**Mr Voigt’s Bombshell**

Mr Voigt (private secretary to the Vice-President of the Executive Council) said that one of the terms of the Gillies-Goodin pact was the victimisation of Mr Willis and himself. Would the Conference stand for that? “I say”, he added, “that the Government today is in the hands of two scabs. If you carry the amendment, you are going to confirm this principle”.

Mr Stuart-Robertson, MLA, said that it was a falsehood to suggest that the pact included a provision for the victimisation of Messrs Willis and Voigt. All the pact contained was that Parliament should be kept in session until certain legislation was carried. He had been in consultation that morning with the leader of the party, who had agreed with him that it was not desirable that the dispute should be brought to a stage at the present time that would force an election.

Mr Voigt asked whether Mr Stuart-Robertson was aware that Mr Goodin made a long statement in the press that as a result of the agreement with the Government Willis and Voigt would go? Was be also aware that he (Mr Voigt) had already been victimized? Was it a fact that there were three sealed envelopes containing the terms of the pact? Was one of these envelopes held by Mr Goodin?

Mr Stuart-Robertson replied that he was convinced that there was no provision in the pact for the victimisation of Messrs Willis and Voigt. He was not aware that Mr Voigt had been victimized. He did not believe, he said, that the three envelopes containing the agreement were in existence. However, he added, he intended to bring the matter forward at the next caucus meeting of the Labour party.

Mr Gibbs, continuing the debate after the dinner adjournment, said he desired to contradict the statement made by Mr Stuart-Robertson that
Mr Lang was opposed to the motion and against an early election. He would give that assertion an emphatic denial. Since lunchtime he had been able to find out that Mr Lang stood in the position of leader of the Labour party, and was prepared to do what the rank and file told him.

Mr Seale (chairman) said that some time ago he saw an alliance between a section of the ALP Executive and the Labour traitors in Parliament. The ambition of this faction was to gain control of the movement. If they defeated the motion before the Conference they would endorse the action of the traitors.

Mr Lang did not care for the votes of Messrs Gillies and Goodin.

**Mr Willis’s Address**

Mr Willis (Vice-President of the Executive Council), addressing the Conference, said that the matter of Messrs Gillies and Goodin was one that no Labour movement could condone and retain its self respect. There were a number of culprits who were worse than Messrs Goodin and Gillies, and who had not come sufficiently to the front to have their heads chopped off also. He did not know of any pact “to get rid of Willis and Voigt”, but he had heard of the move.

Voices: Why quote it?

Continuing, Mr Willis that he knew that part of the business was that he and Voigt had to go, but he believed that his colleagues in the Ministry would not agree to that scheme. For some reason or other a section of the Labour party developed an intense dislike for Mr Voigt. He preferred a Labour secretary to a Nationalist one, and if Mr Voigt went so would he go.

**Premier’s Attitude**

Mr Seale said that the Premier had assured him personally that he “did not care one jot about this thing”. His announcement immediately caused an uproar.

The statement was made in reply to a delegate who asked whether the Premier was prepared for an immediate election, and favoured the expulsion of Messrs Goodin and Gillies from the Labour caucus.

Mr Rutherford, in reply, said that the Government was powerless to put through urgent legislation in consequence of the attitude of the Upper House. He was prepared to state that the Early Closing Bill would never go through during the term of the present Parliament. Five of the members of the 25 Labour members appointed to the Legislative Council by the present Government had already “ratted”. For the next 12 months the Government would be hamstrung.

The motion to expel Messrs Loughlin, Gillies and Goodin was declared carried by 154 votes to 31.
The Pact

Mr Gibb (Clothing Trades) thereupon moved: “That the Conference repudiates and declares inoperative and bogus any pact made with Messrs Goodin and Gillies by any member or section of the ALP; further, that this Conference demands the production forthwith of the terms of the pact”.

Mr J Kilburn (Bricklayers’ Union) seconded the motion. He said he was certain that a pact had been entered into. Labour’s efforts in Parliament had been rendered futile, not by the Nationalist party, but by members of the Labour party. The caucus must forever stand indicted for the elevation of Imperialists to the Upper House.

Mr Connolly (Trolley and Draymen) moved an amendment to the effect that the Conference should expel all those members who were associated in the movement to oppose the leadership of Mr Lang.

The chairman (Mr Seale) ruled the amendment out of order on the ground that the Conference did not propose vindictively to cut off the heads of everybody.

Mr Willis said he did not believe that there existed sealed envelopes containing the pact as alleged. The question of a 44-hour week for rural workers had never been dealt with by the Labour caucus. He contended that the rural workers were entitled to a 44-hour week.

Mr J Beasley (president of the Labour Council) said that the control of the political Labour movement was now in the hands of the rank and file as the result of that Conference.

The motion was declared carried.

A committee consisting of Messrs McPherson, Gibb, Falkingham, Nicholls, and Mrs Dunn was appointed to give effect to the resolution.

The Resolutions to Go Before Cabinet

Very few members of the Parliamentary Labour party were in town over the weekend, but those who were seen were unanimous in their opinion that the ALP Conference had gone too far, that if the resolutions were given effect to greater friction than ever would result in the ranks of the Parliamentary party, and would possibly mean the deposition of the party from the Treasury benches. Two of the members of the party were emphatic when they stated that an election would mean the downfall of the Labour party.

Members were not inclined to dismiss the Conference resolution beyond saying that the Parliamentary party would have to deal with them before finality was reached. It was suggested that the Cabinet would be called together one day this week, when it was possible that a big majority would reject the proposals, and that in any event, it was not likely that the rank and file would adopt them.
Those members spoken to were bitter in their denunciation of the “Red” rules, and it was suggested that when the party meeting was held next week there would be some plain speaking.

Mr Goodin Speaks Out

“The bogus conference is a great, I might, say, a wonderful success for the Trades and Labour Council and the Willis 1919 breakaways”, said Mr V Goodin, MLA, last night.

“Every ‘Red’ of note is present at the Conference except those who are openly members of the Communist party. The latter are present in spirit, and have, as usual, done the organising and whipping up. Country Labour has practically boycotted the “Red” Conference. The few country delegates who did attend were mostly self-appointed. Not one of the large country unions representing over 100,000 unionists, such as the timberworkers, and the municipal and shire employees, is represented, whilst the city representation is almost limited to the Trades and Labour Council supporters, who owe allegiance to Comrades Garden and Co.”

“Now the Labour Movement is free from the tactics and presence of these disruptionists and destructionists, I look forward with confidence to the time when the great Labour party will have the respect due to the humanitarian and constructive principles it upholds. As for myself, I am extremely gratified that the bogus Conference saw fit to ‘Queen-of-Hearts’ me. Evidently my exposure of their plots some months ago has hurt their feelings and upset their plans. Further, they have supplied the public of New South Wales with the proof that I and the majority of organised Labour have nothing in common with them and, their cranky ideas.”

Mr Gillies’ Views

When questioned about his expulsion, Mr Gillies said he was neither surprised nor disturbed at the action of those controlling the “Red” Conference on Saturday in moving for the expulsion of Mr Goodin and himself. “But I am surprised”, said Mr Gillies, “that any honest Labour supporter could treat such an unconstitutional gathering with anything but contempt. As it was against the domination of the Labour movement by this same Willis-Garden-Voigt section and their infamous “Red” rules that Loughlin, Goodin and I struck immediately after the November Conference, it is only natural that this faction should bitterly resent the marshalling of the true Labour movement against their enemy tactics. It is difficult and pitiful to imagine the destiny of the Australian workers being controlled by the Russian head-chopping methods of Messrs Willis, Voigt, Garden, Bennett, etc., and as a member of the ALP I take the anxiety of this clique to expel me from their organisation as a high
compliment. The revised constitution formulated by the joint Executive and the parliamentary rules committee will provide the broad basis for the future of the Australian Labour Party, and not the “Red” rules scheme of these Communist disruptionists.”

Red Rules. ALP Conference. Control of Organisation

At Saturday night’s session, the State Conference of the ALP, convened by Mr WH Seale, discussed the adoption of a series of suggested resolutions which are generally known as the “Red Rules”. These provide for the election of an Executive to control the organisation on the group system.

Rules 73 to 76 read as follows: “The Executive shall consist of a president and two vice-presidents, elected annually by the general Conference, and of members elected annually by a plebiscite of the groups concerned. Groups: Trade union groups – AWU, miners, metals, buildings, food, manufacturing, public utilities, printing, non-manual, miscellaneous, transport (water), transport (land), wood. Councils’ groups – Metropolitan and district electorate councils. Country groups – North division, west-central division, south division.

Representation is to be on the basis of four representatives from the metropolitan and district electorate councils, two representatives each from northern, west-central, and southern divisions. Trade union group representation is to be on the basis of one Executive member for every 7000 members or part thereof, with an additional Executive member for every additional 7000 members, with a maximum of three members for any trade union group.

The rules contemplate representation at the annual general Conference upon a group basis comprised of two groups, viz. the country group, and metropolitan and district group. Representatives to the annual general Conference shall be delegated by these groups.

All persons over 16 years of age, accepting the platform and constitution of the party shall be admitted to membership.

Other Clauses

It is provided in the rules that any member of an affiliated union who is a known member of any other political body running anti-Labour Parliamentary or municipal candidates shall not be entitled to the privileges of membership of the ALP.

Before the members of any union may take advantage of the rules in respect of a selection ballot, the union must have been financial for at least three months.

No member of the Executive shall be eligible for nomination for any preselection ballot or for appointment to any Parliamentary position
during the life of the Executive to which he has been elected or appointed. Nor shall any member of the Executive accept any Ministerial appointment during his term of office, nor for twelve months after.

The Debate

Mr Willis, on behalf of the committee which revised the rules, said that the cry set up by opponents to the new rules had merely been raised because of desire to maintain the old vicious system. The new rules provided for decentralisation and establishment of district conferences, and conferences of particular interests, including the industrial and political sides. He moved the adoption of the report and the rules.

Mr Kilburn (a member of the committee) said that the fact of the “reptile” press attacking the rules was one of the chief reasons why they should be adopted by the Conference.

Mr Willis said that the Federal Conference had carried a resolution dealing with the position of the Communists, and this applied to the whole of the State. He was prepared to insert a similar provision in the new rules to govern the State organisation in regard to the Communists.

The Federal rules, it was stated, excluded the Communists from membership of the ALP.

Further consideration of the rules was adjourned till 10 am today.

ALP Dues

The following motion was also adopted: “That all branches and affiliated unions should be instructed to pay all their dues, obligations, and capitation fees to the secretary appointed by this Conference, and that the secretary appointed by the Conference take charge of the ALP official business and affairs.

Mr Minahan

The Conference instructed the Parliamentary Labour caucus to withdraw Mr PJ Minahan, MLA, as the Parliamentary Labour party’s representative on the directorship of the Labour Daily. Mr Minahan is to be summoned before the Conference tomorrow night to explain his position.

Mr Conroy’s Comment

Mr Conroy (president of the majority ALP Executive) said on Saturday that the bogus Labour Conference had proved a happy hunting ground for the Communists’ leaders, who immediately took charge by capturing the various positions.
Mr Garden’s hand, he added, was shown early in the circulation of Communist tickets for all positions. That these were successful was indicated by the election of Mr Garden’s colleagues on the Labour Council.

When the ALP Executive, in exercise of its constitutional authority, fixed the date of the annual Conference for June 4 it warned the leagues and unions that the Communist officials were planning to capture it. The Executive warning proved correct. Foiled in their plans to control the official Labour party last year, the Reds, in desperation, had captured the bogus Conference convened by Mr Seale. Practically every speaker at the Trades Hall gathering was a nominee upon the Communist ticket run by Messrs Garden and Voigt at the 1926 Conference, when not one was elected upon the ALP Executive. The question of the few Parliamentarians who had attended the bogus Conference would receive the consideration of the ALP Executive at its next meeting.

Mr Conroy added that he viewed with grave concern the action of the Red Conference, which had dared to openly flout the Federal Executive of the ALP, whose officers ruled during the recent crisis that the motion creating Mr Lang a dictator was unconstitutional and against the principles of the Labour movement. The Seale Conference had now reaffirmed Mr Lang’s dictatorship.

The ALP Executive constitutionally endorsed Captain Conway as ALP candidate for the Federal Warringah vacancy. The decision to run a Seale candidate against the ALP nominee indicated the extreme gravity of the actions of those who permitted themselves to be tied to the Red chariot of Mr Garden and his Communist friends. The work of convening the ALP Conference on June 4 next would continue, irrespective of the tactics of the Red wreckers.

Day 3, Monday, 19 April 1927


Amidst tremendous enthusiasm the Labour Conference yesterday adopted the Red rules by an overwhelming majority.

The new rules have been described as Red because, virtually, they place the political Labour party under the domination of the unions, which, in turn, are dominated by the Reds.

The new provisional Executive of twenty-six members will comprise sixteen representatives of trades unions, who will, consequently, control the organisation.

One clause in the rules provides that unions may elect whatever delegates they may desire to represent them at the Conferences, and
opponents of the Red rules point out that under the clause Communists would be eligible.

The Conference also decided to recommend that the selection of a Premier should be taken out of the hands of caucus, and that all Labour Parliamentarians must define their attitude towards the Conference, failing which their nominations at the next elections would not be endorsed.

**Conference Assembles**

The Conference assembled again yesterday morning. Mr WH Seale was in the chair, and there was a large attendance of delegates. Those present included the Lord Mayor (Alderman Mostyn) and Mr AC Willis (Vice President of the Executive Council).

When the morning session was opened the Conference instructed the returning officer, Mr Martin (Clerks), on a motion by Mr J Butler (St George), to take no further action in regard to the ballot papers for the election of an Executive until the rules are finally dealt with. The motion arose from a report from Mr Martin, who pointed out that under the new rules the Executive be elected on the group system.

The chairman of the credentials committee (Mr Padgen) reported that representatives were present from almost every affiliated union. The organisations that were not represented were the AWU, the timber workers, municipal workers, and the furnishing trades. He had been advised that the majority of members of the railway workers’ branch of the AWU were in favour of the Conference, although the officials were opposed to it. Sixteen electorate councils were not represented, including Byron, Maitland, Murray, Newcastle, Northern Tablelands, Oxley, and Wammerawa. Requests for representation had been received from almost every league which composed those councils. A resolution was carried authorising Mr Padgen to issue invitations to the various leagues and councils to send delegates to the Conference, and, further, that the railway workers’ branch of the AWU should be represented at the Conference, providing the branch was financial.

**New Rules**

The Conference then resumed its discussion of the new rules and the motion of Mr AC Willis for their adoption in their entirety.

The Lord Mayor (Alderman Mostyn), who is a member of the rules committee, said that the desire of the committee was to tighten up the laxity. The old rules allowed cliques to take away the control of the ALP from the rank and file.

Mr Seale said that the principles embodied in the new rules had already been endorsed and he therefore would allow no amendments
which conflicted with those principles. Amendments should have been forwarded to the rules committee for consideration, but in some cases were deliberately suppressed.

Mr Willis asked the Conference to accept the rules as a fair basis for the whole of the movement. The aim should be to make the rules a perfect set. He wished to make it clear that “if the rules were adopted for the government of the branch of the Labour party in New South Wales, they would still be subject to the Federal convention which reserved the right to deal with all subjects affecting matters of principle. We stand four-square for the Australian Labour movement”, said Mr Willis. “This is an attempt to lift the movement out of a rut into which it has fallen”.

The motion for the adoption of the new rules was carried amidst scenes of enthusiasm by 276 votes to 4. “I declare the new rules now to be the rules governing the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labour Party”, declared Mr Seale, amidst applause.

Mr J O’Reilly (Hairdressers) then moved that the rules committee should remain in existence until the next Conference, for the purpose of assisting the incoming Executive. The motion was carried.

Mr Butler (St George) submitted the following motion: That a provisional Executive should be appointed by this Conference for a period of three months, during which time the Executive shall arrange for the election of the permanent Executive for 1927-28, on the basis of rule 73; further, in the selection of the provisional Executive, this Conference directs that the groups to meet for the purpose of each group selecting their representatives on the provisional Executive and the basis of representation shall be affiliated unions 16, metropolitan councils 4, and the country 6, and the president and vice-president appointed by the Conference.

It was then decided that the positions of Messrs Magrath, Martin, and Griffin on the committee should be declared vacant, and a woman and delegates from the country should be appointed to fill the vacancies.

The motion was carried.

Afternoon Session

At the instance of the delegate from the Tramway Union, a resolution was carried providing for the election of alternate delegates to fill any vacancies on the provisional Executive. It was decided to instruct the various groups to nominate alternate delegates.

The suspension of standing orders was obtained by Mr James (Northern Miners) to discuss the action of members of the party who opposed the agitation for the Easter Conference.

Mr James then moved that Messrs P Connolly, EC Martin, and JJ O’Reilly be called upon to show cause why they should not be expelled for their alleged action in preventing the leagues in the Newcastle district
from attending the Conference. The chairman ruled the motion out of order, and a motion of dissent from the chairman’s ruling was defeated.

Mr A Teece (Northern Miners) then moved: “That all Executive officers who failed to comply with the request of leagues, and who have been instrumental in stopping representatives of leagues coming to this Conference, be requisitioned to appear before the Executive, to be dealt with in compliance with the constitution”.

Mr Teece explained that at Newcastle he knew two Executive members who were very active industrially and politically. He would like to see them given a chance to vindicate themselves.

Mr D Clyne (Storemen and Packers) opposed the motion, declaring that the rank and file at Newcastle were competent to deal with their own matters. The business of the new Executive was too important in forging machinery for it to embark on a glorified heresy hunt.

Mr Teece pointed out that of 14 leagues in the Newcastle district 12 had been disfranchised. Was it fair for one man to have the power to adopt such a “Mussolini” attitude?

The motion was carried, the voting being close.

Parliamentary Leadership

Miss Stuart-Robertson moved that it be recommended to the rules committee to allow rule 132 of the new constitution to read as follows: That the Conference shall select a member of the Parliamentary Labour party to be the leader of the Labour movement in New South Wales for the ensuing 12 months, and who shall be elected to the position of leader of the Parliamentary Labour party in the House.

Rule 132 of the new constitution provides that the leader of the Parliamentary party, who is Premier when a Labour Ministry is in office, shall be elected by the caucus for the life of the Parliament, provided that caucus may deprive him of the position by a three-fourths majority.

The motion was carried, and the question whether the proposed substitution should take place will be decided at the next Conference.

President’s Warning

A delegate suggested that a motion should be formulated preferring charges against members of the Parliamentary Labour party who had opposed the Easter Conference.

“I noticed in the press this morning”, Mr Seale said, “that Mr Conroy is described as making certain references to this Conference. This Conference will certainly have to take some action with regard to members of the movement of that character.

“It was also ascribed to Mr Conroy that his Executive is to meet. I wish to say that if any number of persons, particularly those members of
this movement who are suspended from holding office, get together and posture as Executive members of the Labour party, whatever happens to them will be their own fault. If it happens, the provisional Executive should get directions with respect to that matter from this Conference.”

Moved by Mr Treflé, Woollahra, the following resolution was passed: “That a uniform system of land valuation for all Federal, State, municipal, and shire purposes be enacted.”

**Greater Sydney**

Mr R Bates (Eastern Suburbs), introduced the following motion, which was carried: “That all ALP branches and members of affiliated bodies, within the municipalities stated in section e, clause 2, of the Greater Sydney Policy, shall at all times be pledged to support the amalgamation of the municipalities set out in such section and clause with the Municipal Council of Sydney, with the immediate objective of bringing into being the Metropolitan-Council as the first step towards the fulfilment of the party’s policy of a greater Sydney scheme.”

Mr R Heffron, secretary of the Stewards’ Union, read the report of the special committee appointed in connection with the Labour Daily newspaper. It was realised, he said, that the paper was working under difficulties in respect of the plant, which was inadequate for requirements. Additional capital of £50,000 was needed, and to that end a levy of 7/6 was being imposed. It was hoped that the time was not far distant when all unions would subscribe to the Labour Daily.

Mr AC Willis, chairman of directors, heatedly declared in reply to an interjection that every penny he possessed was wrapped up in the Labour Daily. His one ambition was to give the Labour movement a Labour paper.

The motion for the adoption of the report was carried.

Upon resumption in the evening two of the three vacancies on the rules committee were filled, Miss Johnstone (ALP Executive) and Mr Treflé (Eastern Suburbs) being appointed. The third position will be decided upon by country delegates today.

On the motion of Mr Arthur (Bathurst) the following motion was carried: “Amendment of State plank under heading land and agricultural cooperation to be added to Federal platform”. The mover stated that it was in the best interests of Australia to add the motion to the Federal platform, which was the proper sphere for such matters.

Mr Tannock (Ironworkers) moved: That this annual Conference of the ALP directs the Parliamentary Labour party to immediately pass the Railway Bill and give legislative effect to the demands placed before Labour’s Parliamentary representatives by the committee appointed by the combined conference of railway and tramway unions, acting on
behalf of the 60,000 workers employed in the Railway Commissioners’ service.

We further direct the Parliamentary Labour party to incorporate in the Railways Bill the following demands, as decided upon by the trade union delegates assembled at combined railway and tramway union conferences, and ratified by the Labour Council of New South Wales:

(1) The legal right to form workshop committees.
(2) The legal right to obtain leave from work to attend to trade union duties.
(3) The legal right to privilege and annual holiday passes.
(4) The legal right to an appeals board, presided over by an independent chairman, whose decision shall be final, to deal with (a) appeals against censure and punishment of any kind; (b) promotion appeals.
(5) That all labour necessary for the carrying on of the railway and tramway service be engaged by the Railway Commissioners through the trade unions.
(6) Full continuity of pension rights for all 1917 strike men, and payment out of the Consolidated Revenue for all contributions to the superannuation fund during the period the men were victimised.
(7) The legal right of any employee to publicly comment upon the Railway Act, or the administration of any department of the railway and tramway service.
(8) Provision to be made in the Railway Bill for one day’s leave to each employee for 52 days worked, or part thereof, sickness included.

Mr Tannock said it was hard to imagine that Parliamentary representatives could place the Liquor Bill before the Railways Bill. Railway and Tramway services could count on 100,000 votes, yet the requests from that quarter had been ignored.

Mr Banks (Railways) said it was time the Government did something for the 60,000 odd men in the railway and tramway services. Those employees demanded the right to criticise the service when it saw large sums of money being wasted in the administration and maintenance of the service.

The motion was carried.

The Conference carried a resolution, submitted by Mr Tully (Woollahra), re-affirming its land tenure policy of leasehold, and urging that its adoption be encouraged by a better system of financial assistance through the State and Federal banks. It was further decided to instruct the Parliamentarians to give the matter their earliest attention.
Parliamentarian's Attitude

Mr Webster (Murrumbidgee) submitted the following motion: That this Conference instruct the president to despatch telegrams or cablegrams to every Labour member of the Federal and State Parliaments, demanding their presence at the session on Wednesday night, for the purpose of obtaining a definite declaration of attitude towards the Conference, and in the event of such persons failing to attend or to declare by telegram or cablegram allegiance to the Conference, we hereby instruct the incoming Executive to refuse their nominations as candidates for selection as Parliamentary candidates of the ALP.

Suggestions were made that Labour members of the Legislative Council and the City Council should receive similar directions. Mr Webster stated that some of the Parliamentarians had intimated that they intended to treat the Conference with contempt.

The motion was carried.

Returning Officer’s Report

Mr Martin, returning officer, reported that the chairman, Mr WH Seale, was the only person nominated for the position of president of the party. He would, therefore, occupy the post for the ensuing 12 months. The announcement was received with prolonged applause. Messrs J Kilburn (Bricklayers) and WM Webster (Murrumbidgee) were elected vice-presidents, and MCL Thompson (Stovemakers), organising secretary.

The two following nominations have been received for the position of general secretary which will be decided by ballot: Messrs JS Beasley and S Bird.

The Conference was adjourned until seven o’clock tonight.

Effect of the Rules

It is expected that the adoption of the new rules will result in a split in Labour’s ranks similar to that of 1919. The Executive elected by the last Conference and now presided over by Mr J Conroy has made it plain that it intends to function as the governing body of the Australian Labour party irrespective of what Mr Seale’s Conference may do.

One of the principal features of the “Red” rules is the provision made for the election of the ALP Executive. While formerly the Executive was elected by ballot of delegates at the annual Conference the body is now to be composed of representatives from the unions, the metropolitan leagues, and the country, who will be appointed at meetings of the members of the party.

Another important change provided for in the new rules relates to the holding of the annual Conference. Under the old system the delegates
to the annual Conference were elected by the leagues and unions, and generally totaled about 300. The “Red” rules reduce the number of delegates by half; and further provide for a number of minor conferences, at which gathering the delegates to the annual Conferences will be elected.

Day 4, Tuesday, 19 April 1927

Grave Position in Cabinet. Seale Conference Denounced. Ministers Blame the Premier. Mr Willis Strongly Criticised.

The Premier (Mr Lang) at a meeting of the Cabinet yesterday repudiated the decisions of the Easter Conference, and asserted he had been misled by Mr Willis (Vice-President of the Executive Council). Mr Willis will probably be asked to hand in his portfolio as a member of the Cabinet in the course of the next few days. Should the Premier maintain the attitude adopted at the Cabinet meeting yesterday he will probably remain at the head of the Government. Mr Lang last night addressed the Labour Conference, which subsequently carried, on Mr Lang’s suggestion, a resolution prohibiting Communists from admission to the Labour Party.

[A report of discussions in Cabinet about developments in the Conference is not reproduced here. Relationships between Premier Lang and his Ministerial colleagues were obviously stretched to the limit at this time, and clearly the normal conventions of collective responsibility in the Government had collapsed. It is also highly unlikely that Lang “repudiated the decisions of the Easter Conference” or repudiated his ally, Albert Willis.]


The atmosphere was electrical when the Seale Conference met at the Trades Hall last night. While the Labour Conference, which had suspended the members of the majority section of the Executive continued its deliberations on the ground floor, the members of the suspended Executive held a meeting on the second floor. The Premier, Mr Lang, was among those to arrive early, and spent the time waiting for the Conference to start discussing the position with the delegates in the crowded passage ways. Much excitement was caused by the fact that the two opposing factions met under the one roof and actually brushed shoulders in the entrance hall.

Although the Conference was scheduled to commence at seven o’clock, it was nearly eight o’clock before a start was made. When Mr Lang entered the conference hall, shortly after eight o’clock, he was received with tremendous applause. Mr Lang occupied a seat on the
platform, other members of Parliament present being Messrs Ely, Stuart-Robertson, Gosling, and Davies, MsLA.

A notable absentee was Mr AC Willis, MLC, Vice-President of the Executive Council, who, up to last night, had not missed a session. Mr Voigt, who acts as minute secretary to the Conference, telegraphed his inability to attend on account of the weather.

It was announced that Mr Kenny, of Cootamundra, had been appointed by the country delegates to represent them on the rules committee.

Mr Lang’s Request

“I think my presence here this evening denotes where I am going”, said Mr Lang, who was granted permission to address the Conference. “You do not need any further indication; but I want to tell the delegates that all my life I have been a Labour man.

“What I have come here tonight for is to ask you to recommit your rules – (Applause.) – not for the purpose of altering what is in them, to clean up the Labour movement, because I think your rules will effectively do that that; but to state definitely, unmistakably, and without any equivocation, that the rules mean what they say. If they do we ought not to be afraid to express it in black and white, and I am going to ask Conference to re-submit the rules, and put into them, in black and white, that no Communist may become a member of the Labour Party. (Applause.) If you insert that you only make the rules say what they mean. If you want me to be the standard bearer – to fight for Labour and the men and women of the country – for goodness sake give me a fair chance, and don’t hobble me. Communism is only a bogey. When that bogey was tacked on to Mr Ramsay MacDonald the people of Great Britain lost the chance of having a Labour Government to rule them. Because that bogey was tacked on to Mr Charlton and the Labour Party in Australia, Mr Bruce was in power; and the country was suffering from not having a Labour Government. I believe that no Communist should be allowed to become a member of the Labour Party. I have said that over and over again; but if it is not in the rules I will say to go out and say something that is not true, and you don’t want me to do that. (A voice: It is in the Federal rules.) If it is in the Federal rules, why hesitate to put it in black and white in your rules. I want you to understand and believe that when I go out and say I am not a Communist, that I do not believe in Communism, and that the Labour Party does not stand for it, let me go out and say it conscientiously.

“I know it is an extraordinary request to make”, concluded Mr Lang, “but it is a fight and it is a hard fight. I believe the Labour movement from now on is going to be better than ever. If you are going to have a good run let me have a straight run. I have been accused of being a
'Prince of Promises', but everything I promised I tried to perform. When I go out and tell the people of the country that this is a Labour movement and not a Nationalist movement, or an Employers' Federation movement, or a movement bought by 'Red' gold, I must have it in my mind or I cannot say it. I ask the Conference to say that no member of the Communist party may join the Australian Labour Party branch of New South Wales.” (Applause.)

Mr Rutherford (Saddlers) moved the suspension of the standing orders to have the rules recommitted, in accordance with Mr Lang's request. The motion was carried, and Mr Rutherford then moved: “That no member of the Communist party shall be a member of the Australian Labour Party”.

The desire of the Premier, Mr Rutherford said, was that the rules should make it clear that no Communists could be members of the Labour Party.

“The Premier has stuck to us”, said Mr Rutherford, amidst applause. “He has come to this Conference, as a man and not as a trickster. The tricksters have not shown their faces here, and that is why it is difficult to know where they stand. We should realize that Mr Lang possesses a degree of honesty which 90 per cent of our Parliamentarians do not possess. We must protect him and incidentally ourselves. If a crisis comes we must be in a position to face the country as a united force.”

Mr Webster (Murrumbidgee), seconding the motion, said that they were faced with one of the greatest crises in the history of the movement.

Mr W Mills (Waterside Workers) opposed the resolution, on the ground that if it was carried it would appear that it had been passed at the dictation of the Cabinet. They should ask what the underlying motive of Mr Lang's request was. If the Cabinet was to blame they should take action against the Cabinet.

Mr Ryan (Storemen and Packers) stated that the Communists were members of the working class and should be allowed to be members of the Labour Party. Their only crime was that they were opposed to the capitalistic system which the Cabinet Ministers were eager to uphold.

Mr Leslie (Northern Miners), who opposed the proposal, said that a few individuals must have met and arrived at a certain decision, and forced Mr Lang to ask the Conference, like so many sheep, to accept their decision. Had they not yet got beyond the day of the Lord of the Manor, when they had to submit to a few individuals? If the rank and file were not to be allowed to make the rules of the movement, a few individuals could again meet and decide to ask the Conference to recommit something else. He would put the case for the Communists. The effective work that was done by any working class man in the ranks of the working class was determined by his hostility towards society, and the castigation received from those who were the rulers of society. If they had any spines they would turn the proposal down.
Mr Rutherford was granted permission to reconstruct his motion to read: “That notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, no member of the Communist party shall be a member of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labour Party.”

Mr Lang explained that he was not present under pressure from his colleagues. He wanted it to be plainly understood, he said, that he was representing himself alone. He bound none of his colleagues. Every one of his Ministers was free, and was absolved from everything he had said. The action he had taken was his alone. Whatever the penalty, it was his. He was asking the Conference to do something he felt was right. (Applause.) He was the leader, and he should be able to judge. It was true, as stated, that the rules debarred Communists from joining the movement. He knew what the Federal rules said; but they had to search for it, and he would ask them to insert the words moved by Mr Rutherford so that “he who runs may read”. To say that a Communist could become a member of the Labour party was a lie, and he asked them to pick up the nail handed them by Mr Rutherford and nail the lie. (Applause.)

Mr Moate (Stewards), in supporting the motion, said that Conference was not being asked to amend the new rules, but to make it clear that members of the Communist party were not eligible to be members of the Australian Labour Party. They were asked to nail the lie in the propaganda of the capitalistic Press.

Mr Sutherland (Enginedrivers) contended that they should not use the time of the Conference in trying to kill every bogey raised by the anti-Labour press. Everyone was satisfied, he said, that the rules would not admit Communists. He hoped the delegates would allow their working class ideas to rise above those of the people who were attacking them.

Mr Butler (St George), who supported the resolution, said the desire was to place the meaning of the rules beyond doubt. They knew what the rules meant, but the great mass of the people read the anti-Labour press.

Mr Howe (North Sydney) said that the Conference was being asked to state its interpretation of the rules in plain English in keeping with the interpretation previously given.

Mr Rutherford, in reply, said that those individuals who were opposing the motion had voted the previous night for the very thing they were opposing. To be consistent they must support the motion.

On the motion being put it was declared carried on the voices. A show of hands was taken, and the chairman announced that it was carried by 10 to 1.

A small section, who voted against the resolution consisted mostly of northern miners’ delegates.
Mr Seale's Statement

Mr Seale said that there would be now no excuse for members to say that the new rules gave the Communists admission to the party. “If the Parliamentarians think the rules lack clarity, why have they not the decency to come to the Conference and express their views”, said Mr Seale. “We want the Cabinet Ministers to state whether they condone the actions of the rump Executive and the doings of Messrs Goodin and Gillies. If they do not do that, I, as president, will leave no stone unturned in an effort to see that every branch of this movement shall deal with them in the manner they deserve”.

The Conference was adjourned until seven o’clock to night.

June Conference. Executive Support.

Members of the majority section of the ALP Executive who have been suspended from office by Mr Seale’s Conference met at the Trades Hall last night and carried a resolution seeking the cooperation of the Parliamentary Labour party in their move to convene the June Conference.

It was also decided to fill the vacancies on the Executive created when Mr Seale and his supporters decided to ignore the deliberations of that body.

The motion carried was: “That in view of a number of Executive members having forfeited their seats upon the ALP Executive owing to non-attendance of Executive meetings, the following be appointed from the list of candidates who contested the last ballot: Messrs G Buckland, J Murrell, H Dessaix, JC Eldridge, J Potter, G McGrath, G Delahunty, and Mesdames Melville, Dwyer, Bodkin, and Miss Sullivan, in place of Messrs H Potter, W Padgen, G Smith, W Mills, S Bird, T Leslie, D Rees, JF O’Reilly Mesdames Green and Stapleton, and Miss Johnson.

The Executive also passed the following resolution: “That in view of the fact that Messrs Falkingham, Kilburn, O’Reilly, Seale, and Smith, who were elected by the last annual Conference to represent this State at the interstate Conference of the ALP, have attended the Conference convened by Mr Seale and have thereby forfeited their positions, this Executive hereby declares that they no longer be recognized as delegates to the Interstate Conference, and, further, that this Executive elect the following members to fill their positions rendered vacant: Messrs G Buckland G Bodkin, J Kaine, W Harrop, J Culbert, and Mrs Dwyer.”

The Executive furthermore decided that Alderman PV Stokes and Mr JF O’Reilly had forfeited their positions on the Federal Executive owing to their participation in the Seale Conference, and elected Messrs J McGarry and R Tatham to the vacancies. Alderman Stokes was invited to attend the next meeting to explain his position with regard to the Federal Executive.
The meeting resolved to notify the Federal Executive that any
communication purporting to be from the Australian Labour Party, NSW
branch, and not signed by Mr W Carey, general secretary, must be
treated, as bogus.

Another resolution carried read: “That the Parliamentary Labour
party be informed that in the opinion of the Executive there is no
necessity for an appeal to the electors until the expiration of Parliament
by time; further, that the party be informed that under no consideration
must they recognise the unconstitutional Conference convened by Mr
Seale now sitting at the Trades Hall.”

*Day 5, Wednesday, 20 April 1927*

**Seale Party. Conference Ignored. Parliamentarians’ Attitude. Mr
Willis’ Speech.**

With a few exceptions, the Labour members of Parliament who were
summoned to attend the Seale Conference, which met at the Trades Hall
last night, failed to put in an appearance. The Conference decided not to
take any action pending the outcome of the special committee’s inquiries
regarding the terms of the pact between the Government and Messrs
Goodin and Gillies.

The Conference carried a resolution declaring the June Conference
convened by the ALP Executive bogus, and instructing branches to repu-
diate the gathering.

Mr WH Seale announced during the evening that he had received
eminent legal opinion that the Easter Conference was a constitutional
one.

**The Conference**

The Conference was continued at the Trades Hall under the chairmanship
of Mr Seale. There was a notable falling-off in the attendance, half of
the seats in the hall being unoccupied when the starting time – 7 o’clock –
arrived. It was nearly 8 o’clock before sufficient delegates arrived to
enable a start to be made.

Mr ER Voigt, minutes secretary, who with Mr AC Willis, MLC, was
absent on the previous night, again attended with Mr Willis, who was
given a rousing reception. Although the Conference had sent urgent tele-
grams to all Labour MsLA directing them to appear before the Con-
ference and explain their attitude towards it, only Messrs Davidson and
M Burke, MsLA, and Mr Keegan, MLC, attended. As their attendance at
previous sessions indicated, they were in sympathy with the gathering,
their presence did not materially assist the Conference in ascertaining to what extent the Parliamentarians were prepared to give their support.

**Mr Minahan's Case**

The first business dealt with was the following motion, which was held over from Tuesday night: “That this Conference demands and instructs the Parliamentary Labour Caucus, immediately to withdraw Mr Minahan, MLA, as the Parliamentary representative on the board of directors of the Labour Daily, and that Mr Minahan should be summoned to appear before Conference on Tuesday evening, 19th inst., to give the reasons for his action in taking legal action against the Labour Daily.

Mr Campbell (Botany) suggested that Conference should reaffirm what it had done. Mr Minahan had treated the summons from Conference with absolute contempt, and it was for the delegates to say whether they were masters of the position or whether they were going to allow any individual to flout the will of the Conference.

Mr Campbell said that, in view of Mr Minahan’s action, he was deserving of the severest condemnation by the delegates, and should be informed that, in the opinion of Conference, he was no longer a Labour representative in Parliament.

The chairman suggested that some delegate should move that, in view of Mr Minahan’s action, the provisional Executive should be instructed to take the requisite action.

Mr Campbell agreed to move as suggested.

Mr North contended that their duty was to deny Mr Minahan the right of endorsement at the next election.

Mr J Beasley said the Labour Daily’s articles of association provided for representation for the Parliamentary Labour party, the Executive, and the Labour Council, and nothing which the Conference could do could alter the situation. The only thing that could be done was to call a meeting of the shareholding unions and ask them to alter the articles so that the three bodies should not have representation on the directorate. He disapproved of Mr Minahan’s action. He had had differences with the Labour Daily, but he believed the place to fight them out was within the movement and not in the court. He was a director and had agreed to the proposal that the three bodies mentioned should not have representation. The liability of the Parliamentary Labour party for interest on the overdraft was £700, and had not been met. The representation should be placed in the hands of the rank and file of shareholding unions.

Mr W Mills (Waterside Workers) moved as an amendment that the endorsement of Mr Minahan should be cancelled until he attended the Conference or a meeting of the provisional Executive.
Seconding the amendment, Mr Edward (Sydney Ironworkers) suggested that Mr Minahan should not be allowed to hold office in the party for three years.

The chairman ruled the amendment out of order, on the ground that a resolution had already been carried, directing that the provisional Executive should deal with Parliamentarians who failed to comply with the directions of the Conference.

The motion referring the matter to the Executive was then carried.

The Pact Discussed

At this stage permission was given to Mr MA Davidson, MLA, to address the Conference regarding the pact between the Government and Messrs Goodin and Gillies. Mr Davidson said that the alleged victimization of Messrs Willis and Voigt was “utter rot”. The results achieved by the agreement with Messrs Goodin and Gillies had justified the pact.

Mr Voigt said that Mr Stuart-Robertson had told them there was no pact. Mr Davidson told them there was a pact, that Mr Lang should repudiate the dictatorship, that the following session should be devoted to country matters and that a press committee should be formed. It was on those things that Messrs Goodin and Gillies actually crossed the floor in Parliament and voted with the Nationalists, just because they wanted such things. They must look upon delegates as children if they thought they would accept that.

Continuing, Mr Voigt asked why the Executive of the ALP should be asked to ratify the pact without the terms being disclosed. He did not know what was in the pact, but the Conference should leave no stone unturned to get the details. If the politicians were sufficiently out of touch with the Labour movement to refuse to pay their allegiance to the Conference, he did not think they would hesitate to form any sort of agreement with Messrs Goodin and Gillies, or to victimise anybody. (Applause.)

Mr Willis’ Speech

Mr Willis said that he did not believe there was any attempt to victimise Mr Voigt or himself. He did know that that was the proposal of Messrs Goodin and Gillies. He did not believe that one of his colleagues would agree to a condition of that kind. Mr Baddeley told him definitely at the time that nothing had been done to injure him. He had invited several members of Parliament to attend the Conference, but they had refused – they were too busy thinking of what to do with him. The bulk of the members of the Parliamentary Labour party believed they were acting in the best interests of the movement in avoiding an election at that time for the purpose of getting their legislation through. “I think if the Conference
decided upon any resolution chopping heads off in wholesale fashion it would be acting wrongfully, and not in the best interests of the movement”, said Mr Willis. “If there are those who have flouted the wishes of the Conference they should be dealt with. I suggest that the branches represented at the Conference should be instructed to demand from their Parliamentary representatives an explanation of their failure to attend the Easter Conference”.

Mr McPherson (Letter Carriers) moved that further discussion should be deferred until the committee instructed by the Conference to seek details of the pact had carried out its instructions, and reported to the Conference on Thursday night.

The motion was carried on the voices.

**Legality of Conference**

In reply to a delegate the chairman said he had secured the opinion of Mr Claude Weston, a barrister, regarding the legality of the Conference. The answers to specific questions were as follows:

- Have the remaining members of the Executive power to postpone Conference till June? — No.
- Has the Executive power to alter the basis of representation at Conference as provided under rule 21? — No.
- Do the remaining members now claiming to act as the Executive legally constitute the Executive of the ALP? — No.
- Are the powers of the Executive under rule 83 subject to the decisions of Conference and of the existing rules? — Yes.
- Is the president acting legally in convening a Conference at Easter and in using moneys in so doing? — Yes.
- Will the Conference at Easter be the legally constituted Conference of the ALP? — Yes. (Applause.)

Mr Nicholls (Botany) moved that the incoming Executive should be instructed to take any steps they may deem necessary to establish the legality of the Conference and its rights to the books and other property of the Australian Labour Party in the State of New South Wales. The motion was carried.

*Day 6, Thursday, 21 April 1927*


The election of officers of the Seale Conference resulted in an overwhelming victory for the “Reds”, who captured all the important positions. The candidates supported by the militants for the provisional
Executive were returned in sufficiently strong numbers to give them control of that body.

**Political Position**

When the ALP Conference opened last night Mr Webster (Murrumbidgee) said he was aware 12 months ago of a movement in the Parliamentary party to depose Mr Lang.

“At the Murrumbidgee conference”, he continued, “Mr Flannery gave us to understand that he favoured the Easter Conference. When I came here I heard that he was with the Cabinet Ministers to destroy and discredit the Conference.”

**Commonwealth Line**

“Nothing is of more importance to the people of Australia than the retention of the Commonwealth Government line of steamers”, said Mr A Moate, secretary of the Stewards’ Union.

“For a number of years we have experienced the underground methods of Mr Bruce and others in authority to discredit the line, and bring about its disposal. This has been for the purpose of creating an impression that the line is a bugbear, and should be disposed of. It was necessary to remove Sir Granville Ryrie to abolish the line. I say Australia is now open to a broadside attack from one of the most vicious combines in the world.”

Mr Moate then moved that this Conference demands, in the interests of Australia, of her exporters and importers who ship by vessels of the Australian Commonwealth line, and of the travelling public, that the Federal Nationalist Government shall not dispose of the vessels of the line. The motion was seconded by Mr Mills (Waterside Workers), and carried.

**Parliamentarians’ Attitude**

In reply to a delegate the chairman (Mr Seale) reported that the following Parliamentarians had recognised the Conference by attending the gathering: The Premier (Mr Lang), Mr AC Willis (Vice-President of the Executive Council), Messrs Lysaght, Keegan, Davidson, Stuart-Robertson, Gosling, Stokes, Ratcliffe, F Burke, M Bourke, Cahill, Tonge, Horsington, Quirk, Kelly, Booth, Davis, Ely, and Murray. Mr Seale said that the only Federal Parliamentarian who had attended was Mr H Lazzarini.
Election of Officers

Mr Martin (returning officer) reported that the ballot for the election of officers resulted as follows:

President, Mr WH Seale (unopposed); vice-presidents, Messrs J Kilburn, (Bricklayers) and WM Webster (Murrumbidgee); general secretary, S Bird (Miners); organising secretary, Mr CL Thompson (Stovemakers). Mr T Martin was appointed as returning officer to assist the provisional committee.

Provisional Executive—

Miners: (2) Mr R James, Mr T Leslie; alternates, Mr M Manion, Mr J Dorrington;

Metal Trades: (2) Mr JJ Graves (Stovemakers), Mr WT Padgen (AEU); alternates, Mr T Falkingham (Boilermakers), Mr J Stewart (Electrical Trades).

Building Trades: (2) Mr T Turner (Painters), Mr TF Morton (Carpenters); alternates: Mr GP Pickford (Plumbers), Mr J Griffin (Builders’ Labourers).

Food: (1) Mr A Sherwin (Hotel, Club, & Restaurant); alternate, Mr LF Gill (Sugar Workers). Manufacturing: (2) Mr DD Jones (Amalgamated Clothing Trades), Mrs Houghton (Amalgamated Clothing Trades); alternates, Mr C Lewis (Tanners), Mrs Stanley (Textile Workers).

Public Utilities: (1) Mr A McPherson (Postal Workers); alternate, Mr MJ Conaghan.

Printing, Non-manual, and Miscellaneous: (1) Mr JJ Bollard (PIEU); alternate, Mr JJ Wills (APT).

Transport (Water): (2) Mr B Mullins (Waterside Workers), Mr WT Swadling (Ship Painters and Dockers); alternates, Mr F Hales (Coal Lumpers), Mr W Findlan (Waterside Workers).

Transport. (Land): (3) Mr W Clementson (Tramway), Mr FE Miller (Transport Workers), Mr MP Ryan (Storemen and Packers). Alternates: Mr H Lockard (ARU), Mr A Bennett (Coachmakers), Mr P O’Sullivan (Loco. Engine).

Electorate Councils (Metropolitan): (4) Mr A North (St George), Mr RA King (East Suburbs), Mr AH Nicholls (Botany), Mrs Dunn (Balmain). Alternates: Nurse Francis (East Suburbs), Mrs Stapleton (Sydney), Mr H Potter (Sydney), Mr AH Norman (North Sydney).

Electorate Councils (Country): (6) Mr FW Yates (Goulburn), Mr AS Berry (Parramatta), Mr JH Stone (Cumberland), Mr A Baston (Bathurst), Miss Lee (Cootamundra) Mrs Webster (Murrumbidgee). Alternates: Mrs Smith (Wollondilly), Mr J Harris (Barrier), Mr J Ward (Bathurst), Mr E Meredith (Wollondilly), Mr H Chandler (Cumberland), Mrs C McGowan (Cumberland).
Delegates to Federal Executive: Messrs J Kilburn (Bricklayers) and T Falkingham (Boilermakers).
Delegates to the Interstate Conference: Messrs Rutherford (Saddlers), O’Reilly (Hairdressers), WJ Gibb (Clothing Trades), WT Padgen (Engineers), JJ Graves (Stovemakers), and A McPherson (Postal Workers).

The Pact Discussed

Mr W Gibb (Clothing Trades) submitted a report on behalf of the committee appointed to inquire into the pact between the Government and Messrs Goodin and Gillies. Mr Gibb stated that the committee had experienced many difficulties in their attempts to interview the Parliamentarians. The secretary of the Parliamentary party (Mr O’Halloran) told the committee he believed that there was an agreement in existence, but he did not sign it and did not know who had signed it. He did not have any authority to say anything until the caucus met on Tuesday. The Attorney-General (Mr McTiernan) admitted that he had signed the Agreement, and would accept full responsibility for doing so. “He told us, however”, said Mr Gibb, “that he did not know where the agreement was, nor what was in it”. (Laughter.) “I am convinced that there is an organised attempt by the politicians to give the one answer: ‘We don’t know where it is’.”

“Mr McTiernan made it specially clear”, said Mr T Falkingham (Boilermakers), “that the committee was acting in full accordance with the desires of the Labour party. The party had nominated a committee to go to Goodin and Gillies. We were satisfied that this committee was to get a settlement at all costs as long as the Government could be kept in power.”

“Mr McTiernan said he would not go back on his signed word”, declared Mr Nicholls (Botany). He added that he would be a cur if he went back on the pact and he would not do so.

“We have established clearly that the pact exists. He admitted today that he signed the pact”.

A motion was passed confirming the receipt and adoption of the report.

A delegate asked whether the Committee which interviewed Mr McTiernan saw anything of the three sealed envelopes containing the pact.

“One of the strangest phases of the situation”, commented Mr Seale, “is that the Labour party has got into very strange waters. The secrecy surrounding this matter is something completely opposed to what the Labor movement stands for.”
Alleged Bogus Rules

Mr Roels (Enginedrivers) brought forward the following motion, which was carried: “That this Conference repudiates the rules drafted by the bogus committee comprising the Carey, Conroy, McGarry Executive factions, the State Parliamentary party, and the trade union secretaries, and further condemns the scurrilous manifesto issued against members of the rules committee appointed by the last annual Conference and re-elected by the two succeeding Conferences. This resolution to be forwarded to all unions and branches.”

Australian Timbers

Mr Chalker (Wollondilly) moved the following resolution: “That the Labour Government take immediate steps to inquire into the Australian timbers used by the Railway Commissioners, also in carpentering and timber manufacturing, and for the production and cultivation of our better class timbers”.

The motion was carried, and the Conference adjourned until this evening.

Day 7, Friday, 22 April 1927


There was a large attendance of delegates at the Seale Conference of the Australian Labour Party, which was continued at the Trades Hall last night.

Financial Position

Mr Bird (secretary), in outlining the financial position, said that the total of the receipts was £1017/5/9, made up of £171/19/5 from electoral councils and £845/6/4 from unions. The liabilities totaled £109/18/-, leaving a credit balance of £827/2/9. They had also to pay for the use of the hall and the doorkeepers.

Attitude Towards Conference

The chairman (Mr Seale) announced the receipt of replies from members of Parliament in response to messages asking what attitude they took up towards the Conference.

A telegram on behalf of Mr Watkins, MP, Newcastle, stated that Mr Watkins had left for South Australia last Tuesday.
A cable message from Messrs Baddeley (Minister for Mines) and McKell (Minister of Justice) was read as follows: “Unequivocally opposed repudiation agreement with Goodin and Gillies. With respect to Conference generally stand by majority party and the Cabinet.”

A voice: What does that mean?

The chairman: It is a true-blue politician’s reply. The message sent to Messrs Baddeley and McKell was as follows: “Easter Conference now sitting wants your attitude re same definitely defined”.

Continuing, Mr Seale said that Messrs Baddeley and McKell were well aware before they left Australia that a fight was going on over the question of an Easter Conference. The two Ministers stated that they were opposed to the repudiation of the agreement with Goodin and Gillies, but the cable did not mention anything about the agreement. No doubt persons attended the Conference who acted as runners. It was apparent that those who were fighting in the dark had sent a message to Messrs Baddeley and McKell, and perhaps had misrepresented the position. No one had had greater respect in the past than he for Mr Baddeley. If the party was the party that Mr Baddeley always said it was he must stand by the Conference, but if he had now changed his mind and considered that the few people in Macquarie Street were the Australian Labour Party, then he had thrown a somersault. The reply meant nothing, and savoured of rail-sitting and of men who wanted to be with the majority, irrespective of whether it was right or wrong.

Mr EC Riley, junior, MP (Cook) replied that he regarded the Conference presided over by Mr Seale as a representative gathering, and although some might doubt its constitutionality from a movement point of view, its bona fides could not be questioned. He considered it his duty to support the Conference in session.

Mr Manion (Miners) said that if Mr Baddeley was “sitting on the fence”, the Miners’ Federation was done with him. Mr Voigt said that Mr Baddeley was not “sitting on the fence”. The cablegram showed that he had “come down off the fence”.

A delegate: You have an axe to grind.

Mr C Baines (Liquor Trades) moved that Messrs Baddeley and McKell be again communicated with, and asked whether they would confirm the cablegram repudiating the Conference and its decisions.

Mr James (Miners) said that the miners had got a shock. The miners were solidly behind the Easter Conference. The secretary of the miners would communicate with Mr Baddeley asking him whether he was prepared to stand behind the miners.

Mr Seale said that he was satisfied Messrs Baddeley and McKell knew what they were doing.

The motion was carried.
Public Servants

Mr Martin (Clerks) moved a motion protesting against the alleged non-payment of 1923 basic wage increases to the State Public servants on the lower scale. Mr Martin said that the Attorney-General, Mr McTiernan, had been responsible for withholding the increases. “Mr McTiernan was not game to go against the heads of the Public Service Board”, said Mr Martin.

The motion was carried.

Blind Workers

Serious charges regarding the conditions under which the blind work at the Industrial Blind Institution were made by Mr W Padgen (Engineers), who submitted a report on behalf of the committee appointed to inquire into the matter. Conditions, he said, were deplorable. The minimum wage for blind workers was 17/6 a week for single workers, as against £1/17/- in Queensland, where the blind were under Government control, and the minimum wage was £1/10/- for married men, as against £2/10/- in Queensland. In no instance had the committee found that after 44 hours’ work more than £3 could be earned by the blind each week. The committee did not blame the institution, because it existed on charity, but rather the industrial movement for allowing the conditions to continue.

The recommendations of the committee were as follows:

(1.) The nationalisation of the Industrial Blind Institution.
(2.) Adequate representation of the blind workers on any committee of management that might be appointed.
(3.) Payment of living wage to all adult blind employees.
(4.) Official recognition of the association for the blind.

Mr Miller (Moulders), in seconding the motion for the adoption of the report, said that the blind workers had had to remain at the institution until 7 o’clock at night to receive their wages.

The resolution was carried.

Position in China

Mr Porter (Broken Hill) moved: “That this Conference joins with the workers of the world in their united protest against armed intervention in China. It should be obvious to the Imperialists of Great Britain that the gunboat policy now being pursued in China must end in disastrous results, involving world war. Therefore this Conference protests against the pursuance of this policy, and calls upon all workers of Australia to prevent any troops or foodstuffs being sent from this country. We
congratulate the “Hands Off China” committee on the splendid work it is carrying on, and resolve to elect a delegate to assist the committee in its work.”

The motion was carried, and Mr MP Ryan was appointed the Conference delegate.

**Mr Willis’ Amazing Speech. Remarkable Revelations. Vicious Attack on Colleagues. Fight with the Gloves Off.**

Cablegrams have been received from Messrs Baddeley and McKell, which, in the opinion of members of the Ministry, clearly indicate that they are in favour of observing the Gillies-Goodin Pact.

Ministers, therefore, hold that they are supported in their demand for ousting Mr Willis from Ministerial position. Mr Lang, however, steadfastly supports his colleague.

Mr AC Willis, Vice-President of the Executive Council, addressing the Seale Conference at a late hour last night, delivered a bitter attack upon Cabinet Ministers who had opposed his actions regarding the Conference.

In the course of a heated defence Mr Willis described his opponents as “miserable intriguers, who would assassinate a colleague behind his back”.

A resolution was passed reaffirming the confidence of the Conference in Mr Lang, and stating that it would only recognise him as the leader of the Parliamentary party.

**Mr Willis’ Speech at the Seale Conference**

At the Seale Conference last night, Mrs Houghton (Clothing Workers), asked Mr Willis, MLC, if he would tell Conference the reasons for Cabinet demanding his expulsion from the Cabinet.

Mr Willis: That is a plain question, to which I will give a plain answer. Following the resolution carried by Conference respecting Messrs Goodin and Gillies, I understand that Cabinet, or a large portion of it, held a meeting. As a matter of fact it is well for Conference to know that last Saturday night, after Conference concluded, I rang Mr Lazzarini from the railway station asking him to arrange to send some blankets to those in the northern district who had been forced out of their homes by the floods. Mr Lazzarini burst out over the phone about the resolution that had been carried authorising the Premier to reconstruct the Cabinet. He said: “That resolution will have to be rescinded, and, what is more, we will reconstruct the Cabinet, and say who will be in it”, I said: “I don’t want to talk about that over the phone, but he went on roaring over the phone. I have heard him roar before, and I turned to my colleague
and said: “Lazzarini is damned insulting; but it is at a safe distance over the phone”. The next I heard was that they had been holding meetings.

“They Want My Scalp”

“I went to the Treasury”, continued Mr Willis, “when Mr Lang, in his blunt way, said to the Cabinet Ministers who came in: ‘Here they are, Albert. These fellows want your scalp’. I said: ‘Is that all?’ Then they commenced to enumerate a number of sins of this Conference, for which I apparently have been held responsible. (Laughter.) Not one of them had the decency or courage to ask me for my resignation. They finally asked me whether I supported the resolution for the expulsion of Goodin and Gillies and I said: ‘Yes’, and they said, ‘That is enough’. McTiernan said: ‘The resolution will have to be rescinded. Are you prepared to vote for its rescission?’ I said: ‘No. If the matter comes before the Conference again I shall vote the same way’. They looked at me and left me.”

“Lang to Go, Too”

“They did not say then: ‘Willis, you must resign’. I did hear from another source, however. McTiernan had said that if he (meaning the speaker) had any intelligence he would have known that they wanted him to resign. (Laughter). This is not confidential Government business, otherwise I would not mention it here. It has gone past the stage when it is a matter of kid gloves. This is the exact position. They said: ‘Lang, if you stand by Willis you go with him’. I understand their intention is to have the caucus meeting on Tuesday. The principal business is the present proposition of executing AC Willis first, and if my chief, the Premier, agrees to stand by me, then he goes next. Mr Voigt has made a remark about Willis and himself being victimised. I do not believe that there would be any man who calls himself a Labour man who would have the indecency, and who would descend to the depth of victimising a colleague. This trouble dates back to the time of the ‘Unholy Alliance’. ‘Ted’ Magrath admitted to me at that time when the agreement was drawn up that I was to go.

“Then came the caucus matter, when it was decided again that Willis was to go. No reasons were given. Apparently Goodin and Gillies have something in the agreement to enable them to swing the lead over the heads of certain caucus members, and to make them say, ‘Willis and Voigt have to go’. So far as I am concerned, I have been brought up in the industrial movement. There is not a man in the movement who can point the finger at me, and say I have done anything wrong. (Applause.) I would leave a thousand times rather than be mixed up with [that] miserable crowd of curs and (the last word was drowned in the applause). They will not come to the Conference. They prefer to hold
their secret meetings. The same old gang is responsible for it all. On Tuesday next they will decide whether two men, Jack Lang and Albert Willis, against whom no man can point the finger of scorn, are to be executed, or two ‘scabs’. (Applause and cheers.)

Mr Willis continued: “It was said ‘Willis led the breakaway in 1919’. The fight we put up in 1919 was against corruption in the movement. When I came back I continued to fight on to the ballot box scandals, and exposed the plotters, and we have worked consistently until we have brought in these rules to put the movement on a clean basis. Then they threaten and challenge us. Today we take up that challenge, and I am prepared to fight them throughout New South Wales. (Applause.) For years the cry has been about the controlling forces of the Labour movement of New South Wales. For years people have said they would like to come into the movement, but asked: ‘What have we to submit to to come in? The way the ballots are run, it would be like undertaking the task of walking through a sewer! Today there is a general desire to have a clean strong movement. The people of New South Wales will rally to the Labour movement in such numbers, if they see we are clean and straight, that the opposition will never have a chance. (Applause.) I would rather be outside fighting than be inside being strangled. I want to appeal to you. This Conference has given a good lead. Let us see to it that, in the interests of the movement to which we belong, we try to restore the old ideals of the Labour movement and when we get that going, and stand four square, those miserable intriguers who would assassinate colleagues behind their backs will, in a very short time, be relegated to the gutter from which they should never have sprung.” (Applause.)

Mr Bird (secretary) moved: “That this Conference reaffirms its confidence in Mr Lang, as expressed by the last annual and special Conferences, and farther that this 1927 annual Conference will only recognise Mr Lang as leader of the Parliamentary Labour party of the State; also that we reaffirm all our previous decisions regarding Goodin and Gillies and the Parliamentary pact”. Mr Bird said that it was absolutely essential to clean the movement up. One of the reasons he had joined the movement was to clean it up and put it on a sound basis. Men were forming a pact because they were tied to another pact to force out of the movement men like Mr Willis, who had always fought for the movement.

Mr White seconded the motion, which was carried amidst loud applause.

Confused Situation

The political situation is now so confused that members of the Ministry, the Labour caucus, and of the two opposing factions are not able to foresee what the outcome will be.
The Premier (Mr Lang), according to his supporters, is in such a position that members of the Labour party will find it difficult to depose him even if they desired to do so. The caucus meeting has now been definitely fixed for Tuesday morning, Monday being a public holiday.

The followers of the Premier contend that should the caucus go to the extreme length of passing a motion of censure on him, or attempt to set up a new leader, Mr Lang could do either of two things. He could advise the Governor to grant a dissolution, or he could form a new Ministry composed of the faction that offers him support in the caucus, no matter whether the faction is in the majority or not. He could then carry on the Government without meeting Parliament till the end of September when the general elections would take place.

**Will Not Forsake Willis**

The Premier, it seems, is now determined not to forsake Mr Willis (Vice-President of the Executive Council), and he will probably make this announcement at the caucus meeting next week. The Premier has not yet defined his attitude towards the Gillies-Goodin pact, but it is expected that he will tell members of the party when they assemble, that he will honour the agreement. By doing so, he will probably gain the votes of many caucus members who fear an immediate dissolution.

Mr Willis is determined that he shall not be ejected from the Ministry. Should the caucus decide in favour of his expulsion from the Cabinet he will probably use all means in his power to bring about a dissolution of Parliament, or induce the Premier to reconstitute his Ministry from members of the caucus who support the Seale faction.

**Absent Ministers**

A meeting of Ministers was again held yesterday, but the Premier and Mr Willis were not present. It was alleged that a cable message had been received from Mr Baddeley (Minister for Labour) and Mr McKell (Minister for Justice), from overseas to the effect that they were totally opposed to the repudiation of the Gillies-Goodin pact as decided by the Seale Conference.

It was therefore claimed by the Ministers who are in revolt against Mr Willis and his private secretary (Mr Voigt) that both Mr McKell and Mr Baddeley were of the same mind as themselves in the present dispute.

Mr Baddeley was one of those who signed the pact together with Messrs McTiernan (Attorney-General), Mutch (Minister for Education), and Fitzgerald (Minister for Local Government). These Ministers are determined that the agreement shall be honoured to the letter during the term of the present Parliament.
It was stated at the meeting that Mr Baddeley had cabled that the agreement should be observed. The Ministers contended that Mr Voigt had further aggravated his offence by the attack he had launched at the “Red” Conference against the Minister for Labour during the Minister's absence abroad. Mr Voigt had alleged that Mr Baddeley had victimised him. Ministers asserted that strained relations had existed between Mr Willis and Mr Baddeley for some time prior to the latter’s departure for England, in regard to a disagreement concerning Mr Voigt.

A number of Ministers also stated that they were in agreement with Mr McCormack (Premier of Queensland), who is alleged to have stated that Communists desired to get into the Labour movement merely to hasten revolution. The Communists regarded the Labour party as an obsolete organisation.

No Quarrel With Premier
Opponents to the Seale Conference, both in the Ministry and the Parliamentary Labour caucus, assert that they have no quarrel with the Premier; but the dispute they claim was with Mr Willis and Mr Voigt, for the part they had played in what they regard as the “Red” Conference. Another subject of remark was the difficulty experienced in inducing Mr Willis to meet the members of the Ministry in Cabinet, although Mr Willis seemed during the past few days to obtain numerous opportunities of conferring with the Premier alone. The Government, Ministers contend, must get rid of the influence of Messrs Willis, Voigt, and Garden (secretary of the New South Wales Labour Council).

Minister's Denial, Murrumbidgee Conference
Mr Flannery (Minister for Railways) stated yesterday that at the Seale Conference a statement was attributed to Mr Webster to the effect that “at the Murrumbidgee conference, Mr Flannery gave them to understand that he favoured the Easter Conference”. This statement, said Mr Flannery, was entirely incorrect. He was not present at the Murrumbidgee Council meeting, as at that time he was confined to his bed, suffering from tonsillitis. He had intended being present, but informed the secretary that owing to his illness he was unable to attend.
Day 8, Saturday, 23 April 1917

Investigating committee.

The Labour Conference convened by Mr Seale was brought to a close on Saturday, the principal subject for discussion again being the pact between the Government and Messrs Goodin and Gillies, MsLA.

Mr Lysaght, MLA, said that he had never seen the document known as the pact, nor had Mr Lang. Mr Loughlin and his colleagues had been expelled, not because of the pact, but because they crossed the floor of the House and voted against the Government. He was not aware that there was a pact in existence. Mr Lysaght appealed to the Conference to give Mr Lang “a fighting chance”. The Premier, he said, had had to fight a campaign of abuse and misrepresentation from one end of the country to the other. If the Conference gave him a free hand he would select his own time to go to the country. The electors would then deal with those men who had betrayed the Labour Government.

Mr McPherson (Postal Workers) moved that the question of the existence of the pact should be left in the hands of the investigation committee, with instructions to report to the Executive.

Mr Mills suggested that the committee should be allowed to be present at the caucus meeting on Tuesday, when the pact would be discussed.

The Vice-President of the Executive Council (Mr Willis) said that the Attorney-General (Mr McTiernan) had admitted that the document containing the pact was in existence. He did not wish to withdraw one word he had said, but he did not want to trade on the Premier or the Conference. He would be a cad if he did anything which would precipitate an election. No question of mere comradeship would force him to do anything harmful to Mr Lang or the party.

The motion was carried.

At the instance of Mr C Baines (Liquor Trades) a resolution was carried directing the Government that there should be no extension of hotel trading hours after 6 pm, and that, in the next session, legislation should be introduced repealing the Act giving certain hotels the right to sell liquor with meals after 6 pm.

Mr Padgen (Engineers) moved that the Conference should stand adjourned until next Easter, with a proviso that the Executive should be instructed to convene it at any time, should the occasion warrant it.

The motion was carried.

“Red” Domination. Mr F Conroy’s Statement.

“The Seale Conference has almost bluffed itself out of existence”, said Mr Conroy, president of the ALP on Saturday. “Desperate efforts are now
being made to keep up the numerical strength of the Conference by issuing badges to outsiders who have not been credentialled by any organisation. These outsiders are known as ‘floating’ members of the Communist party.”

“So far”, continued Mr Conroy, “the only contribution of the Conference to political history has been a series of bombastic resolutions, which have completely destroyed the ambitious hopes of the conveners. The resolutions were so obviously of Soviet conception and so repugnant to Australian sentiment that the State Labour Cabinet threw down the gauntlet by repudiating the whole of the decisions. And this great head-hunting gathering, which was going to expel more than half of the Parliamentary party, has been left with hardly enough courage to whistle openly ‘The Red Flag’.

“All that remains”, added Mr Conroy, “is its pretentious provisional Executive, elected under a set of rules that have already been repudiated by both the Parliamentary Labour party and the constitutionally elected ALP Executive. But the personnel of the so-called provisional Executive is interesting because it gives an example of how completely the Labour movement would have been dominated by the Communists under the group system provided for in the Red constitution.

“An examination of the Red ticket run at the last annual Labour Conference shows that a substantial majority of this new provisional Executive is composed of delegates who then frankly classified themselves as members of the Communist group.

“The Red rules I am convinced were specially devised to assist these wolves in sheeps’ clothing to secure control of the machinery of the ALP. Those who know their past activities can only regard Mr Lang’s appeal to such a body to exclude Communists as the act of a political ‘Little Red Riding Hood’.

“The ALP Executive”, concluded Mr Conroy, “is not disposed unduly to penalise delegates to the Seale Conference who were misled by the misrepresentation of the conveners. The rapidly diminishing attendances of the original delegates indicate that many earnest Labour men and women quickly realised the trap into which they had been led, and dissociated themselves from the activities as soon as the Communist control became apparent.”