CHAPTER 7
Australian Labor Party,
New South Wales Branch
Annual Conference,
29 – 31 March 1929

Report in The Sydney Morning Herald

One can detect that the Lang machine was already in election mode at the 1929 Conference and confident of victory. Almost no business was conducted and the meeting took only three days (allowing delegates to go to the races on Easter Monday!). No sign of disunity was allowed to develop. Part of the rationale given by the Executive was that the two preliminary regional conferences had done their work so well that there was little for the State Conference to do. However, it was almost certainly true that the Rural and Metropolitan Conferences had been stage-managed as efficiently as the State Conference.

The one matter of controversy that surfaced was some dissatisfaction with instances of graft in preselection ballots, leading to suggestions that these ballots should be abolished – with all decisions presumably to be made by the Executive. That proposal (originating from the radical left as a veiled criticism of Inner Group meddling) was not taken up, although the Inner Group would not hesitate to interfere, officially or unofficially, in any preselections not already sewn up.
Executive Report of NSW ALP for 1928-29

(Mitchell Library Manuscripts, 329.3106/3)

Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales,
Executive Report

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The 38th Annual Report and Balance-sheet of the Australian Labor Party, State of New South Wales, is hereby submitted for your consideration.

Since the presentation of the last report many of the old Branches have been reconstituted, and the following new ones brought into being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Bankstown.</td>
<td>Yerong Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carlton</td>
<td>Grahamstown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hopetown</td>
<td>Paxton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park Hill</td>
<td>Condobolin</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Punchbowl</td>
<td>Carrathool</td>
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<td>Ariah Park</td>
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<td>Rankin Springs.</td>
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<td>Galong</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wombat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pelaw Main</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lake Cargellico</td>
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<td>Darlington Point</td>
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<td>Ardlethan</td>
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<td>Whitton</td>
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Showing a Branch membership of 24,361, and a Union membership of 146,670. Total, 171,031, which, allowing for the 40,000 membership claimed by the AWU, and not represented, would make the total considerably over the highest ever recorded.

Executive Members

Mr W Webster (President), JJ Graves (Vice-President), G Mullins (Vice-President), Mrs Dunn, L Webster, S Green, Mrs F Barrett, P Geoghan, Mrs Webster, F Finnan, Miss Lee, JH Stone, M Manion, R Yates, H Knight, C Anderson, A O’Gorman, M Connaghan, W Fandlan, W Clementson, P O’Sullivan, M Ryan, F Morris, G Pickford, L Gill, J Stewart, J Hooks, J Bollard, W Jones, W Isley.
At the Easter Conference Mr JJ Graves was elected President in the place of Mr WM Webster, and Mr CE Martin was elected Vice-President in lieu of Mr G Mullins.

During the year Mr Cooper resigned and was succeeded by Mr Hill. Mr Fandlan was replaced by Mr Rose; Mr Roach taking the place of Mr Geoghan. Mr Dundon took the place of A O’Gorman.

Executive Attendance
The Executive during the year held in all fifty (50) meetings – general and special – the attendance being as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C Anderson</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Barrett</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Clemenson</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Dunn</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Fandlan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Green</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W Isley</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Knight</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>F Morris</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A O’Gorman</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Roels</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Stewart</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L Webster</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jas J Graves</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Mullins</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Geoghan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Rose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Martin</td>
<td>6</td>
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Country Provincial Conference
The Country Provincial Conference of this year was held at Orange, opening on 25th January, 1929, and was presided over by the General President, Jas J Graves, and, notwithstanding the disastrous drought existing in the country, and the consequent lack of employment and the general depression existing owing to the apathy of the Nationalist Governments, and a general curtailment of expenditure upon public works and schemes for the advancement of the rural districts, the Conference was a great success, and during its two days’ sitting succeeded in dealing with the whole of the Agenda.

The political side was very strongly represented, twenty-two members of Parliament being in attendance. The leader of the Party, Mr JT Lang, attended the Conference throughout, and rendered material assistance and advice. The social side was very efficiently catered for.
The Mayor of Orange extended the visitors and delegates an official welcome to the town. The local branch of the ALP provided an excellent smoko-social, which deserves special mention, and was greatly appreciated.

**Metropolitan Conference**

The Metropolitan Conference met in the Trades Hall, Sydney, on 9th February, 1929, and finished a very lengthy Agenda on the 14th February. The Conference, which was presided over by the President, Jas J Graves, consisted of 170 delegates, and proved to be one of the best conferences ever held by the Movement. The whole of the 129 items listed upon the Agenda Paper received attention and very careful consideration. The very many amendments of the rules received the most careful scrutiny, and where found to be acting harshly or causing friction were recommended to Annual Conference for alteration in order to permit of the Movement’s general expansion and smooth working.

**Federal Elections**

During the year the Federal Elections were held, and, whilst the Party were not successful in gaining the Treasury Benches, the wonderful success achieved proves conclusively that the trend of public opinion has so changed that the Movement can, with all confidence, look forward to holding the power of Government in both Federal and State at the next appeal to the electors. The wonderful vote received by our Senate candidates, who were all returned by overwhelming majorities, proves conclusively that the State as a whole is thoroughly disgusted with Nationalist rule, and, in spite of the opposition of the official AWU, the Movement continues to make progress. Thanks to the wonderful spirit of self-sacrifice made by the members of the Movement, who, by their donations and services made it possible to provide and distribute campaign literature on a scale never before attempted, and it can be truly said that the success achieved was due solely to the efficient organisation and hearty cooperation of the Branches and Unions comprising the Movement.

Our report would not be complete if it did not make reference to the attack which has been launched against the hours and conditions of the Timber Workers, which strikes a vital blow at our industrial and political aspirations, and must be resisted with all the force at our command. In order to popularise our Movement and raise funds for fighting purposes, a May Queen Competition has been inaugurated to culminate in a May Day Ball to be held in the Paddington Town Hall on the night of May 1, at which the ALP May Queen will be crowned.

Your Executive, realising the vital necessity of rendering all the assistance possible to ameliorate the distress which, of necessity, must exist in
the ranks of the unfortunate comrades rendered idle by the capitalistic attack ably assisted by its henchman Judge Lukin, have decided to allocate the funds derived from the Queen Competition of 1929 to be distributed amongst the Timber Workers and kindred Unions affected, and sincerely trust that, with the willing patronage of the members of the Movement, and its supporters, a substantial sum will be raised.

As a result of resolutions carried at the AWU convention held at Coolangatta this year the Federal Executive were requested to endeavor to adjust the differences as between the AWU and the ALP Movement, and the following were the three points held to be in dispute:

All amounts advanced to the Executive by way of fees to be recognised as part payment of any fees due to the ALP, State of NSW.

1. Lifting of suspensions on members of the old Executive.
2. Payment of Worker account.
3. The Federal Executive met in Sydney on 27th February, 1929, and decided that the points referred to, be submitted to the Executive, requesting them to confer with a view of settling the matters in dispute.

The Executive met on Friday, 1st March, when the President of the Federal Executive was present, and explained the position from the Federal Executive’s viewpoint. After hearing the President, your Executive decided that the question of the AWU joining up with the ALP was similar to other Unions; that is, that they should become financial, and place all matters in dispute before Conference, where their delegates would be present to put their case for consideration, as Conference, being the supreme body, alone could finally determine all such matters. Conference having imposed the suspensions, the lifting of same could only be done by the same body.

The third point was a new one not previously raised. In the general interest of all concerned, it is hoped that the AWU will recognise the wisdom of linking up and consolidating our forces to meet the enemy now marching in mass formation to attack the workers.

With the view of establishing a fund for propaganda and fighting purposes, attention has been given to the raising of funds by making the May Queen Competition an annual function, and, in addition, with the loyal assistance of the Women’s Central Organising Committee, in arranging social gatherings and collecting together with a profit from the annual picnic, it is confidently anticipated that a substantial sum will be raised.

In concluding this report the Executive desire to thank the staff and all loyal workers for their attentive and valuable services rendered to the Movement, which materially assisted to facilitate the large amount of work encountered and accomplished during a most strenuous term.
Organising Secretary’s Report

The organisational work of the Party during the year ending 1928 may be divided into three categories:

(1) Preparation and conducting of the selection ballots for the House of Representatives and Senate.

(2) The construction of our organisation for the Federal elections.

(3) The conducting of the Federal campaign.

The forethought of the Executive in moving the machine for the early conducting of the ballots and the selecting of certain seats for intensive organisation has been clearly demonstrated by the wonderful results at the Federal general elections. Many of the candidates had been campaigning months prior to the dissolution of the Parliaments.

During the months of February, May, June, July, itineraries were carried out in the Hume, Riverina, Macquarie, Werriwa and Eden-Monaro electorates. On each occasion members of the State and Federal Parliamentary Parties, as well as the candidates, accompanied me.

During these visits, Branches of the Party were formed, and where the conditions did not permit of the formation of Branches, Committees were formed. This enabled the Executive to compile a comprehensive list of reliable supporters in every important centre.

The organisations established in Barton and Lang were responsible for considerable intensive work. In Barton three groups of lady members of the Party were formed in the following centres: Rockdale, Hurstville and Oatley. These groups raised a sum of £80 for the Barton campaign funds.

The Federal Campaign was entered upon with the appointment of Mr EG Theodore MHR, as Campaign Director on the 3rd August, 1928. The work entailed in the preparation of the campaign was rendered all the more difficult because of the lack of funds.

The preparation of the itineraries, country and metropolitan, were my particular charge. The manner in which the members of the State Parliamentary Labor Party assisted in the Federal Campaign has no parallel.

This was accomplished by the spirit of cooperation existing between the ALP Executive and the State Parliamentary Labor Party.

Mr Scullin, MHR, warmly congratulated me on the wonderful assistance rendered by the State Parliamentary Labor Party, and expressed his sincere thanks for the splendid demonstration of Labor’s solidarity manifested throughout his itinerary in New South Wales. He stated that the Sydney Town Hall meeting was a fitting climax to his successful NSW campaign.

During the year three State by-elections and the Federal General Elections were conducted. These campaigns have at least shown the value of intensive organisation. Parramatta by-election is an excellent example, the Nationalist majority being reduced from 3653 to 821.
achieve this high degree of organisation a substantial fighting fund must be established. There should be at least £10,000 in the fund on the eve of the dissolution of the Parliament for general election purposes.

During the next recess of the Parliaments, arrangements will be entered into with members of the Parliamentary Parties to visit all the important centres of the State. The object of these visits is primarily to establish Branches and Committees for our next State campaign.

This Movement has neither time nor place for the pessimist. Our recent political achievements have been truly wonderful and give the lie direct to the pessimist. When the tocsin sounds for the next State General Elections, Labor’s army of workers will be legion. By untiring and united efforts Labor will achieve a decisive victory which will give our Parliamentary Leader, JT Lang, untrammelled opportunities to give effect to Labor’s humanitarian policy.

J Macpherson, Organising Secretary.

Annual Report of Parliamentary Proceedings

Activities of Federal Parliamentary Labor Party for Year Ending February, 1929

The year has been crowded with events which indicate a strong revulsion of public feeling against the Bruce-Page administration. The pressing claims of the community for improved industrial and social legislation have been utterly disregarded. The broken promises respecting child endowment, unemployed insurance, homes for the people and protection of Australian industries, have had a marked effect upon those who have previously supported the Composite Government. The Bruce-Page Government’s record has been noted for its coercive industrial legislation and partisan administration. The amendments to the Arbitration Act and the regulations under the Transport Workers’ Act are striking examples of the class legislation of the Government. The efforts made by the Party to resist the Government’s iniquitous legislation are well known to those who have closely followed the doings in Parliament. Despite our strong opposition, however, members alone count when the division bells ring.

During the last twelve months legislation dealing with the following matters was introduced and passed by the Government: Amended Arbitration Act, Sale of Commonwealth Line of Steamers, Land Tax Assessment Bill, Transport Workers’ Act. Public attention was drawn by the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party to the notorious Abrahams’ case, also the Government’s purchase of radium abroad. An item of legislation that the Labor Opposition was able to effectively expose and have withdrawn was the British Empire Exhibition Bill. Concerning most of these subjects you have had previous report which dealt specially with
such matters. They were also included in the policy speech of Mr Scullin, and from a thousand platforms explained at the recent Federal elections.

That the policy of Labor met with approval from a large section of the people was evident by the increased strength of the Party as a result of the general elections. The Federal Parliamentary Labor party increased its strength in the House of Representatives from 23 to 31 members, and now constitutes the largest individual party. Herewith is set forth a statement showing the position of each political party as indicated by the votes recorded last November throughout the Commonwealth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Nationalist</th>
<th>Ind.</th>
<th>Total.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>604,272</td>
<td>200,089</td>
<td>330,837</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1,135,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>427,079</td>
<td>86,729</td>
<td>344,206</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>858,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>147,351</td>
<td>238,293</td>
<td>11,226</td>
<td>396,870</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>134,731</td>
<td>4,749</td>
<td>102,886</td>
<td>265,386</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australia</td>
<td>75,735</td>
<td>85,171</td>
<td>11,226</td>
<td>160,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>33,250</td>
<td>56,209</td>
<td>89,459</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Commonwealth</td>
<td>1,422,418</td>
<td>291,567</td>
<td>1,157,602</td>
<td>34,246</td>
<td>2,905,833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the Federal Parliament has only been in session for one month since this altered position of parties, which clearly indicated the disapproval of the Australian public to the anti-working-class policy legislated for and administered by the Bruce-Page Government, they have so early proved their disregard for the very clear mandate thus expressed by the people and by their motion to disallow the Public Service Arbitrator’s Award as to Postal Workers, a very clear indication of their hostility to the principle of Arbitration and determination to lower living standards can be proven. Introducing the Amended Transport Workers’ Bill within this early period shows how anxious the Government is to continue with its policy of coercion, even to the point of vindictiveness, and this class of legislation must only have one result, namely, to disturb the relations in industry and import chaos and disturbance into the affairs of the community.

Members representing coal-mining districts have brought under the notice of the Government the serious condition of affairs and the unfair attitude of the coal-owners in association with Mr Bavin, State Premier for New South Wales, who, in their desire to reduce the cost of coal production, insisted upon certain reductions in the amounts earned by the coal miners, although the present basis of living represented in their wage standards is at the very lowest point. A Royal Commission was demanded to enquire into all phases of the industry, including profits and capital. Mr Bruce, recognising the unanswerable case that had been presented, indicated his willingness to appoint a Royal Commission to
enquire into those matters that had been the subject of representation by the Coal Miners’ Federation in conjunction with their Federal Labor representatives.

In this annual report it is necessary to indicate that in March of last year Mr Matthew Charlton, who had served the Party with such distinguished merit and sincerity of purpose, tendered his resignation as leader, owing to ill-health, and later indicated that it was not his intention to seek re-election in the Federal Parliament. Mr Charlton, during the long term of association with the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, had won the entire respect and confidence of his colleagues. He undertook the position of leadership during what possibly will prove to be some of the most difficult years in Labor’s history. He never faltered, always loyal and devoted in the cause of Labor, he gave of his best, and we here record a very sincere tribute of appreciation for his wonderful services to the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, and his kindly relation with each and every member. Upon the resignation of Mr Charlton, Mr JH Scullin, who had acted as deputy-leader, was elected to the position vacated by Mr Charlton. Mr Arthur Blakeley was elevated to the position of deputy-leader. Upon the re-assembling of Parliament after the elections of November last, Mr JH Scullin was re-elected to the position of leadership, and Mr EG Theodore raised to the position of deputy-leader. The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party now enters upon its work in the new Parliament with renewed hope and encouragement, believing that the prospects of Labor were never brighter. We appeal to the Movement generally to display such interest in the political questions of moment and the organisation of our Party that, when the next appeal is made, whether it be early or late, we will be amply prepared to meet the position to return a Labor Government to the National Parliament that will replace the tyrannical laws passed by the present Government with just and humane measures to he administered impartially.

JH Scullin, Leader.
Norman Makin, Secretary.

**Report of State Labor Party**

During the past twelve months the work of the Labor Party in the State Parliament has been most effective in embarrassing and confusing the Government, and so delaying the passage of much of the harmful legislation which the Nationalists propose to introduce.

Our retarding influence has been manifest in the legislative sphere only, but much harm to the workers has been done by the Government in its acts of administration.

The outstanding feature of the Parliament has been the unity prevailing within the Party itself, and the close attention to duty on the part of all its members.
Our leader’s scathing attack on the Premier regarding his extraordinary attitude towards his fishing friend, Arnot, who was involved in the civic scandal, was a feature of the Parliament. The case was admirably prepared and was a most damning indictment of the Premier, showing the partial manner in which justice is handed out by the Nationals. It shattered the atmosphere of smug complacency surrounding Bavin, and has gone a long way towards destroying the effect of the newspaper propaganda of uprightness and honesty which they have endeavored to apply to him.

In conjunction with the organising officers of the Movement, the Party is engaged in the preparation of plans for a campaign of organisation and propaganda. It is confidently expected that this cooperation within the Movement will result in Labor having at the next election a better organisation than ever it has had before.

At the Parramatta by-election held at the beginning of the year, the Party reduced the Nationalist majority by 3000 votes – a really splendid achievement. The Parramatta result demonstrated two things – the first is that the Bavin Government has lost the confidence of the people, and that if it went to an election tomorrow it could not be certain of winning more than 25 seats. The second lesson which it taught us is that when Labor is united and all its sections are working in harmony, and it is ably led, our Party is almost invincible. At that by-election all the Parliamentary Party and all the Union officials threw themselves whole-heartedly into the campaign. It is many years since such unity in the Labor Movement prevailed at an election, and the result demonstrated what a tremendous factor is such a condition.

The immediate future in the State Parliament is a dark one for the people of this State. So far, our Party has been able to curb the Government. Whether our efforts to prevent Bavin from taking away the 44-hour week, reducing the basic wage, stopping the payment of family endowment, and taking away the main benefits from the Workers’ Compensation Act will be as successful during the next 12 months as they have in the period under review, is very doubtful.

We managed to delay the Loyalist Bill during three sessions, but the Government has succeeded in making that measure law, although the Act is considerably modified to what it was when the Government introduced it.

The outside influences controlling the Bavin Government are becoming impatient for the legislation which they expect Bavin to pass for them, and the Premier himself is becoming more vicious at the delay which the Labor Party’s tactics have imposed upon him. We must expect, therefore, that the Government will be even more ruthless between this and election day than it has been in the past.

W Davies, Secretary, State Labor Party
Annual Conference of NSW ALP, 1929
(The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 March and 1 April 1929)

Day 1, Friday, 29 March 1929


At the annual conference of the Australian Labour party yesterday, allegations were made that graft had been practised by members of the party, and the executive was instructed to appoint a special committee of inquiry.

The senior vice-president of the conference (Mr M Ryan) declared that even under the new rules preselection ballots were ‘crook’ and should be abolished.

Most of the morning session was devoted to the appointment of committees. Mr JJ Graves (president) was in the chair.

Those on the platform were: Messrs Theodore (deputy leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour party), J West and J Tully, MsP, JM Baddeley (deputy leader of the State Labour party), B Olde, C Lazzarini, McGirr, J Tully, Dunn, Butler, and W McKell, MsLA.

Mr ER Voigt was again appointed minute secretary and Mr Pitt timekeeper.

Mr Pickford presented a report of the credentials committee showing that there were 148 delegates. In two or three instances credentials were withheld because of alleged irregularities. The report was adopted.

Disorderly Scene

During the election of an agenda committee Mr Deane (municipal workers), said that tickets were being run for official positions. “Here is one of them”, shouted Mr Deane, flourishing a printed form in his hand.

The chairman: The only difference is that one section has printed its tickets, and the other section has not.

Uproar followed when Mr Neilson (Miners) pointed to Mr Deane and charged him with running a ticket.

“I did not run one. I exposed it”, excitedly declared Mr Deane.
“Yes, you did”, said Mr Neilson, “and my organisation will not stand for it. If there is going to be any of this ticket business Bill Neilson will get out of it”.

Mr Graves: I intend to preserve order at this conference. If order is not maintained I will appoint a committee, and instruct it to prepare the business for conference.

Mr Mills (Waterside Workers): Good old Mussolini.

Mr Graves: I will order anybody out if I find he has anything to do with the running of a ticket.

The following agenda committee was eventually appointed: Messrs W Gibb, Nurse Francis, C Anderson, R King, and W Neilson.

Those appointed members of the credentials committee were: Messrs AC Willis (Miners), Sutherland (Miners), J Kilburn (Bricklayers), Pickford (Carpenters), and Lyons (Storemen and Packers).

**Annual Reports**

The annual report or the ALP executive submitted to the conference disclosed that the membership of the party in New South Wales was 171,031, exclusive of the 40,000 in the Australian Workers’ Union.

In consequence of a dispute between the AWU and the ALP the affiliation of the former organisation is at present in suspension. The union membership of the party is 146,670 and the branch membership is 24,361.

“While the party was not successful in gaining the Treasury benches in the recent Federal elections”, the report read, “the wonderful success achieved proves conclusively that the trend of public opinion has so changed that the movement can, with all confidence, look forward to holding the power of government in both Federal and State at the next appeal to the electors. In the general interest of all concerned it is hoped that the AWU will recognise the wisdom of linking up and consolidating our forces to meet the enemy now marching in mass formation to attack the workers”.

Mr W Davies, secretary of the State Labour party, in his report criticised the legislation of the State Government. “During the past 12 months”, the report reads, “the work of the Labour party in the State Parliament has been most effective in embarrassing and confusing the Government and so delaying the passage of much of the harmful legislation which the Nationalists propose to introduce. Our retarding influence has been manifest in the legislative sphere only, but much harm to the workers has been done by the Government in its acts of administration.”

The reports will be debated at a later stage in the conference.
Sunday Sitting

Mr J Hook (Ironworkers’ Union) moved that the conference should sit on Sunday. This, he said, would enable delegates to enjoy Monday as a holiday. The conference might conclude its business by Sunday night.

Several country delegates opposed the motion. They said that many desired to attend church or visit friends on Sunday.

Mr Neilson (Northern Miners) said that the last time a Sunday sitting was held the conference was an absolute farce. He felt absolutely ashamed of it, and was against the proposal.

Mr Hook, in reply, contended that many delegates went to the races on Monday, and the conference suffered as the result.

The motion was carried by 65 votes to 32.

The chairman, during a discussion on a motion for the adoption of the standing orders, ruled that rule No 7, which provides “that any delegate may move the suspension of the standing orders to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance not included on the agenda paper”, was out of order.

Mr Falkingham (Boilermakers) dissented from the chairman’s ruling. He maintained that the conference was really the ALP, and it should not preclude business of urgent public importance coming before the conference.

The chairman, in reply, said that anything of such importance would be brought before the conference by the executive.

When the vote was taken the deputy chairman, Mr M Ryan, declared that the chairman’s ruling had been upheld by 55 votes to 51.

It was further decided that a quorum of conference should be 50 members.

Presidential Address

The president (Mr JJ Graves), in welcoming the delegates, said that under the new rules the ALP had made wonderful progress. During the year, two very successful conferences were held, and although one of these was not largely attended, a large amount of business was done, and the result was that there were less than 100 motions on the business paper instead of 400 or 500, as at previous conferences. The balance-sheet showed that the organisation was stable financially, and that amply emphasised the fact that there was no need of tactics resorted to previously by certain people. Because of the increased efficiency of the organisations, it was able to put up a very great fight in the Federal election. If other States had done as well as New South Wales there would have been a Federal Labour Government. It was particularly noticeable, he said, that where the influence of the AWU was weakest, Labour’s strength was greatest.
Referring to a circular issued over the name of Mr Buckland, the president said it was a tissue of misrepresentation, and showed the discreditable tactics of the AWU in attempting to disrupt the Labour movement, and attacking Labour officials. The 1927 Easter conference had expelled certain AWU officials, because they had not carried out the expressed opinion of the rank and file of the movement. Mr Buckland had announced that he was doing all in his power for peace and harmony. Many people, however had their own opinion of Mr Buckland’s idea of peace. Since the AWU had severed its connection with the party, there had been more peace than ever before. Nevertheless the AWU officials could still re-enter the party by paying their fees and abiding by its regulations. There would be no back-door entrance. It would not be allowed to do anything any other affiliated body would not be allowed to do.

It was resolved to admit representatives of all newspapers except the *Evening News* and the *Daily Guardian*.

It was decided that nominations for the positions of State and Federal officers should close at 9 pm last night, and the ballot would be taken on Sunday. Mr JB Martin was elected returning officer, and Messrs Southern and Thompson were appointed scrutineers.

**Glebe Bribery Charges**

Mr Barker (Ryde) asked the organising secretary (Mr AJ Macpherson) for an explanation of his action in regard to the charges of bribery and graft. Was it a fact, he asked, that the organising secretary had deliberately planned with three other individuals to trap an alderman of Glebe Council?

Mr MacPherson said that he was willing that any action he had taken should be investigated by a committee, and later when the matter had been properly probed he would vindicate his attitude and his action. He did not want to see the name of the movement dragged in the depths of calumny.

**Support For Strikers**

Resolutions pledging the delegates to support, both morally and financially, the miners in the event of the employers making an attack upon their wages and conditions, and the timber workers and allied unions in their present industrial trouble were carried. It was also decided to demand a public inquiry into the coal industry, from the point of production to the consumer. Labour members were instructed to do everything in their power to assist the miners in the event of a crisis. Speaking to the motion, Mr Southern (Illawarra mines) said that during the past year he had received the sum of £116 as wages. That was
for 12 months’ work. The average amount earned by miners on both the northern and southern coal-mining districts was much less than the basic wage.

Mr P Keller (Southern Miners) stated that at Mount Kembla colliery, where he was employed, the average wage earned by the employees during the past year was £5/13/ per fortnight. The company which owned this particular mine was able to ship coal 2/ per ton cheaper than any other colliery on the coast, yet the price was not reduced. The proprietors of the coalmines were not desirous of giving the public cheap coal.

Mr E Voigt (Northern Suburbs) announced that the miners’ representatives, if they cared to do so, could put their case before the public, by means of the Trades Hall Broadcasting Station 2KY.

**Selection Ballots**

Mr M Ryan (senior vice-president of the ALP) aroused a storm of protests when he declared that even under the new rules some preselection ballots had been ‘crook’ or failed. He said that it was impossible to make preselection ballots clean.

“We have had dispute after dispute before us, and we thought everything was clean and above board, and we gave our decision, and later found that some of the ballots were as ‘crook’ as any ever ‘faked”, declared Mr Ryan. “It is no use tampering with the rules regarding selection ballots, for while a certain class of man and his supporters are desirous of securing a position, no rules or bars will hold them. They are like burglars, and nothing will stop them. The only way to clean up preselection ballots is to abolish them.”

Mr DW Dwyer (Public Utilities) said that Mr Ryan had slandered the movement. If he knew that ballots were ‘faked’ he should have told the executive.

Mr Connaghan (Shop Assistants) declared that he was a member of the executive, but he had no evidence whatever of there being a ‘crook’ ballot.

The discussion arose out of a motion moved by the metropolitan provincial conference that a special committee of conference should be appointed to go thoroughly into the matter of the future selection of ALP candidates.

The motion was carried. Miss Cunningham, and Messrs JJ Hook, T Falkingham, PG Hannett, and J Kilburn were appointed as a committee.

It was announced by the country delegates that they had nominated Mr Lockhart Easton (Mudgee), who opposed Dr Earl Page at the last Federal elections, as vice-president of the ALP.
Graft Charges

“That an investigation committee be set up by the executive to inquire into all charges of graft made against members of the ALP. Any member being proved guilty shall be expelled”. This was another motion submitted by the metropolitan provincial conference.

Mr M Ryan (vice-president) urged that the ALP executive itself should investigate the charges of graft. He pointed out that if a permanent committee were appointed the people under suspicion could “nose around and if possible nobble the committee”. “They will probably try to get this grand jury and give its members a ‘rake-off’ ”, said Mr Ryan.

The motion was carried.

A motion which had the object of compelling candidates for Parliament or municipal and shire councils to have three years’ continuity of financial membership with an ALP branch, and also an affiliated union before the date of election, was moved by Mr Thompson (Milk and Ice Carters).

He said that under the present rules there was nothing to prevent a Nationalist, who was a member of an affiliated union, contesting a selection ballot.

Mr Moate (Stewards) pointed out that the motion, if carried, would penalise members of a Labour league who belonged to a trade union organisation covering his calling, which was not affiliated with the ALP. He instanced the case of league members who belonged to unaffiliated bodies such as the Teachers’ Federation, and who, although good league members, would be debarred from nominating as candidates.

“It’s too silly and absurd for words”, was how Mr AC Willis, MLC, described the motion.

The motion was subsequently amended, making it optional for intending candidates to belong for three years either to a Labour league or a bona-fide trade union organisation.

On a division, the motion and amendment were defeated. In consequence rule 102 still stands. It reads as follows:

“No person shall be nominated as a candidate who has not been a financial member of a branch or affiliated trade union, or other affiliated organisation for three years immediately prior to nomination”.

Mr JJ Graves re-elected President

The returning officer (Mr Martin) announced that Mr JJ Graves was the only candidate for the position of president, and he declared him elected. Nominations received for the positions of vice-presidents wore Messrs L Easton, WA Jones, and MP Ryan, and those for the Federal executive were Messrs TL Falkingham, Fitzgerald, J Kilburn, Nurse Francis, and Mrs Lynch.
A motion that the rules of the Federal organisation should be amended to provide that in the event of any affiliated union not taking a Senate preselection ballot their members should be allowed to vote through the branch in the district they are members of was carried.

The conference adjourned until this morning.

Day 2/3, Saturday/Sunday, 30/31 March 1929


Unlike previous gatherings, which have lasted three weeks, the ALP conference came to a sudden conclusion last night. All the business was completed in three days.

Extremists suffered a reverse when the senior vice-president (Mr M Ryan) failed to secure reappointment.

The leader of the Opposition (Mr Lang) delivered an attack on the Premier (Mr Bavin).

Dozens of resolutions dealing with every phase of Labour activity were carried.

Prohibitive Tariffs

The conference approved of a prohibitive tariff being placed on all overseas goods that could be manufactured in Australia. A similar resolution was carried at the Metropolitan Provincial Conference.

It was also decided that an export duty should be placed on all hides and skins for the purpose of having them treated in Australia.

Country Campaign

An extensive country campaign on behalf of the Australian Labour party in New South Wales was outlined by Mr AJ Macpherson on Saturday.

It was the intention of the executive, Mr Macpherson said, to place the party on a sound scientific basis. Complete harmony existed between the State Parliamentary party and the executive, who would jointly conduct the campaign. Federal Labour members would also cooperate in the campaign of reorganisation in the country electorates.

Mr Macpherson’s remarks were made following the submission of two motions from the Metropolitan Provincial Conference, to the effect that members of Parliament should be required to work in conjunction with the organising secretary, addressing meetings and organising in the electorates during recess, and that they should be required to address their constituents at least twice yearly. The motions were carried.
**Commonwealth Line Sale**

A resolution expressing the indignation of the conference at the ‘base betrayal’ of the primary producers of Australia by the sacrifice of the Commonwealth line of ships to the international shipping combine was carried. The conference also unanimously passed a resolution “viewing with the greatest alarm the proposed increase of oversea freights, which, if imposed, will be an intolerable burden upon our already overburdened primary producers”.

**More Liberal Pensions**

The conference confirmed a recommendation from the Metropolitan Provincial Conference that the Federal Labour party should seek at the earliest opportunity a revision of the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act, with a view to eliminating existing anomalies.

This question had been before the Federal Parliament on more than one occasion, said Mr Theodore, MP, who promised definite action in the next session. It was impossible to bring the matter before the last short session, he said, though Labour members were definitely of the opinion that the provisions of the Act should be liberalised.

A meeting of Opposition members had definitely formulated a policy in regard to these pension provisions before last session, said Mr Theodore.

The conference decided against Labour members of Parliament meeting political opponents in secret for the discussion of political or industrial matters. The conference also registered an emphatic protest against Parliamentarians pledging themselves to secrecy at such conferences.

**Radio Monopoly**

It was a most outstanding fact that wireless oversea transmission should be in the hands of a monopoly, said Mr E Voigt, who moved: “That beam and radio transmission be nationalised and operated wholly in the interests of the people of Australia by the Government, and a private monopoly be not permitted”. The motion was carried.

**Liquor Trade Control**

A resolution instructing “the next Labour Government” to give prominence to the nationalisation of the liquor trades, and that the provisions of the Early Closing Act should apply to all hotels was carried by a substantial majority.
Conference decided to instruct the next Labour Government to institute a tax on the public for the purpose of establishing hospitals and sanatoriums.

**Executive to Revise Bills**

The necessity for closer coordination between the executive and Ministers in charge of bills before Parliament was mentioned by Mr Falkingham (Iron Trades), who moved that the executive of the ALP appoint a committee to revise and harmonise bills after the second reading in Parliament, the sub-committee to be revisory and advisory only.

Mr Lang said that the motion as it stood would be harmful to a Labour Government. The business of Parliament would be delayed while a bill was being revised. It was then suggested that the motion should be altered to provide that the bills should be submitted to a committee as soon after drafting as possible. The motion was carried in its amended form. Mr A Griffith was refused readmission to the party, after a lively debate, during which there were several stormy scenes, resulting in the ejection of some delegates.

A motion in favour of the registration of barmaids was defeated after a spirited discussion in which several women delegates participated.

**Propaganda Fund**

A scheme for the establishment of a propaganda fund was submitted by Mr J Hook (Iron Trades). It provided that the objects of the fund would be to give financial assistance to members of the Parliamentary Labour parties and lay members of the party undertaking country itineraries as arranged by the executive.

It was proposed that the fund be raised by requiring each Labour member of Parliament to contribute half per cent of his salary. In addition all salaried officials of the unions were to be requested to subscribe half per cent of their salary, and the members of the unions would be exhorted to contribute to the fund.

An amendment moved by Mr Ward (Surry Hills) was to the effect that 10 per cent be levied on the salaries of all Labour members of Parliament and trade union officials in excess of £301 per annum. It also suggested the raising of the per capita fee from 4d to 6d.

The amendment was defeated, and the motion was carried by 63 votes to 30.

In reply to Mr Willis the president (Mr JJ Graves) said that the scheme was quite voluntary, and if members of Parliament and trade union officials refused to pay the levy the ALP could not compel them to do so.
This announcement was greeted by loud laughter, jeers, and shouts of “What’s the use of it?”

**Voted At Hotel**

Allegations that he had to record his vote outside an hotel at a recent State selection ballot were made by Mr Ward (Surry Hills).

Voices: Why did you go there?

Mr Ward: I had to chase the returning officer there.

The speaker said the movement could hardly talk about clean ballots when a tramway returning officer at a selection ballot could place the ballot papers in his pocket, and an elector had to follow him into hotels to get a ballot paper.

This statement followed the submission of a motion that all unionists should have the right to vote in the same manner as the miners and tramway men in the selection ballots. Mr Ward said it was far better to leave the ballot to the active members of a union than to hand it over to the union officials, who were potential politicians.

Mr Lang said that the motion, if carried, would be an important step towards abolishing the Labour leagues, which the movement in this State could not do without.

The further discussion was deferred until the committee appointed by conference to report on the question of selection ballots made its report.

“‘It is high time the Labour party became honest with itself. You say teach working class ethics, and this boils down to the socialisation of industry, and that is what we desire to teach the children”, said Mr H Cook (Canterbury Group) when it was moved that the ethics of trade unions and working class economics be taught in public schools.

The motion was carried.

**Weekly Basis For Awards**

A motion that the next Labour government should place all awards on a weekly basis was submitted by the Metropolitan Provincial Conference.

Delegates explained that in certain unions men discharged or put off during the week were paid only for the actual time they worked. Under a weekly hiring system such men would be paid for the remainder of the week. The motion was carried.

Delegates decided that ex-Government employees retired on pensions of £4 per week or more should not be allowed to accept employment to the detriment of the unemployed.
Rail and Tram Examinations
The conference resolved to direct the next Labour Government to introduce a measure providing for the abolition of periodical staff examinations of employees of the Government railways and tramways.

Child Slavery Alleged
“Shocking condition of child slavery exists in the milk industry”, said Mr Thompson (Milk and Ice Carters), when he moved that the principle of child labour be applied to all industries.

Under present conditions, he declared, hundreds of children rose at midnight, and worked till school time, and then went to school, where they slept part of the day. Some of them rarely washed, and in certain areas the milk was produced and distributed under dreadful conditions.

Mr M Ryan said that the most practical way to prevent child slavery was to increase the compulsory school age to 16 years, and to give child endowment for children up to that age.

Mr Lang counselled that great care should be exercised in making any proposal to increase the school age or the age for endowment. “First get your Labour Government”, he said.

The motion was carried.

Labour Colleges Advocated
The question of the establishment of a residential college to teach economics and political science was considered by delegates at the suggestion of Mr Saidy (Wollongong) who said the working class must be taught economics.

Mr McNamara (North Sydney group) moved that Labour colleges should be established to teach economics and other allied subjects, and that all school teachers with Labour principles be instructed by conference to teach on the basis of the class struggle. This was carried.

A further resolution that children be taught the details of the working and the election of State and Federal Parliaments and municipal councils was carried, but delegates unanimously voted against a motion to ask State school teachers not to have children in school before or after the specified hours.

Mr Lang’s Address
The usual address delivered at the conference by Mr Lang, leader of the Opposition, was characterised by a bitter personal attack upon the Premier (Mr Bavin), whom he alluded to as a “publicity hunting hypocrite”.

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Time had more than vindicated his forecast when he addressed the last conference, said Mr Lang. Then he had predicted a period of “strife and stress and hardships” in the industrial life of the people. The cause for this depression Mr Lang attributed to the fact that dominant power in both Federal and State political circles was in the hands of men aligned definitely against the Labour movement and the ideals upon which it was founded.

Mr Lang made special reference to the Workers’ Compensation Amendment Bill, a measure which, he said, “sucked the life blood of the injured and emaciated of our Industrial life”. It was a bill, said the leader of the Opposition, which had been instigated by inhuman greed, regardless of human agony. It was this bill, above all others, which made the Bavin Government “hateful in some respects, despicable in others, and meanly contemptible in all”.

Mr Bavin had purported to give the people something they already had, but took the rights of hundreds of children. The bill reeked with deception and imposture. If it ever again saw the light of day he would expose it in all its baseness, its brutality, is deception. For the present it was dead, but its memory, according to Mr Lang, stank in the nostrils of all decent people.

**Public Servants’ Rights**

The rights of the Federal and State public servants were discussed, and it was decided to add to the ALP rules and fighting platform planks providing that Federal public servants should have full rights under the Arbitration and Trade Union Acts, that they have the power to proceed against the departments for breaches of arbitration awards, and that both State and Federal public servants be allowed full rights to contest Parliamentary and Local Government elections, and that efforts be made to reduce the number of temporary and exempt employees.

**Mr MP Ryan Defeated**

The ballot for appointment of two vice presidents resulted: Messrs L Easton (Mudgee) 111, W Jones (Clothing Trades) 87, M Ryan (Storemen), 48. Messrs Easton and Jones were elected as senior vice-president and junior vice-president respectively.

Mr Ryan held the position of senior vice president last term, and his defeat constituted a severe reverse for the Communists, for whom he acted as spokesman.
Labour Daily

A move to have altered the representation of the various organisations on the board of directors of the Labour Daily to provide that unions should be allowed one director for the first £5000 or part thereof invested in the paper was defeated, as also was an effort to levy an affiliation fee of sixpence per unionist per quarter for the paper.

Educational Conference

The conference adopted a resolution that the Federal executive of the Australian Labour party should be asked to convene an All-Australian educational conference as soon as possible.

“We must capture the school children’s minds”, said Mr W McNamara, supporting the motion. “They are now being taught along lines of making them good Nationalist voters”. Because hotel proprietors were employers Mr Whelan (Liquor Trades) moved that no member of the United Licensed Victuallers’ Association should be eligible for membership of the ALP.

The motion was defeated.

On the question of immigration, the conference resolved, (a) that immigrants should be submitted to no dictation test other than in English, (b) that migrants should be subject to rigid health inspection at point of embarkation. The conference later agreed to a proposal to suspend all immigration schemes, Dreadnought scheme included, for a considerable period.

Another proposal accepted was that the Government should allocate suitable land and accommodation for the unemployed in the various electorates.

The conference concluded with cheers for the Labour party.