

OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

AUSTRALIAN

LABOR CONFERENCE,

HELD AT SYDNEY, N.S.W.,

1 DECEMBER, 1902.

SYDNEY:

**The Worker Trades Union Printery,
311 Kent Street.**

1903

(Copy of Damaged Photocopy)

AUSTRALIAN LABOR CONFERENCE

OFFICIAL REPORT

The second Australian Labor Conference opened the sitting at the Trades Hall on Dec. 1, 1902, when the six States in the Commonwealth were presented. The following delegates presented credentials.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Messrs D Macdonnell M.L.A.
T.D.Richardson, J.C.Watson M.H.R.,
W.G.Spence M.H.R. and George Black.

VICTORIA

Messrs. F.Tudor M.H.R., P. Beam?
M.L.A., G. Bromley, ? McGrath, H.Beard,
J.Phillips and P.W McGowen

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Messrs. E.R. Batchelor, M.H.R., F?.S
Guthrie, M.L.C., A.A. Kirkpatrick,
M.L.C., T.Price, M.L.A., and F.W.
Coneybeer, M.L.A.

QUEENSLAND

Senator W.G.Higgs, and Messrs. W
Kewley, F.Holliday, A. Hinchcliffe,
W.Colborne, and W.O'Sullivan.

TASMANIA

Mr R. O'Dwyer,

WEST AUSTRALIA

Senator De Largie, Senator Pearce and
Messrs R.W.Croft and F.Blamite.

Apologies for non-attendance were read
For Senator McGregor(S.A.)Mr
C.C.McDonald M.H.R.(Q.) and Mr J.S.T.
McGrea?M.L.A. (N.S.W.)

OPENING OF CONFERENCE.

Mr H. ond, president of the New South
Wales Political Labor League, in declaring
the Conference open, extended a welcome
on behalf of the P.L.L. to the delegates.
This was the second conference of the
kind that had been held since the passing

of the Federal Constitution Bill, and in
some respects would be even more
important than the previous gathering. It
was then feared the Federal Parliament
would be conservative in character and
that the constitution placed almost
insuperable barriers in the path of reform.

But the elections had brought into being
the most democratic Parliament that had
existed in Australia and one in which
Labor

representation had been most effective.
They now had their second Conference, at
which delegates would be required to
frame a platform on which Labor would
stand solidly throughout the
Commonwealth. They had for the first
time a representative from Tasmania,
which completed the chain of unity around
the Commonwealth. In that respect the
conference was unique. The results of the
deliberation.

were moving forward in the Labor interest
ns would be awaited by Labor bodies
throughout Australia with the keenest
interest, and he felt sure was expressing
the opinion of the vast majority of Trades
Unionists and Laborists when he said they
had every confidence the Conference
would frame a platform that would be for
the advantage, not of a section of the
community only, but for humanity as a
whole.

APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS.

On the motion of Mr.Macdonnell,
seconded by Mr Bromley, Mr J.C.Watson
was appointed president.

The President, in returning thanks, said he
would have preferred to see Mr Lamond
appointed to the position, but as that
gentleman had not sought election as a
delegate there was no opportunity for his
appointment.

The appointment of officers and committeemen resulted as follows:-

Vice-President: Mr T Price.

Secretary: Mr A Hinchcliffe.

Assistant-Secretary: Mr W O'Sullivan.

Standing Orders Committee: Messrs. Richards, Kirkpatrick, Pearce, Beard, Dwyer and Holliday.

Agenda Committee: Messrs. Spence, Phillips, Batchelor, Higgs, Croft, and Colborne.

Conference adjourned until 2pm.

On resuming the standing orders committee recommended that the hours of sitting be 10am to 1pm., 2.30pm to 5.30pm.

A motion by Senator Higgs that evening sittings be held from 7.30pm to 10pm was defeated, only the mover and seconder voting in the affirmative.

The President, in his opening remarks, referred to the importance of the matters upon the business paper, and pointed out that since the

last Conference considerable advances had been made by the Labor Party. There had been a change in the attitude of those who were outside the Party and an increase in knowledge by those entrusted with the work of drawing up proposals. He directed attention to the steps that had been decided upon by "the other side." In the early part of November, a conference of employers was held in Melbourne, a gathering representative of the Employers' Unions in the several States, at which it was decided to take concerted action for the elimination from politics of those who were moving forward in the Labor interest. He would not go further than draw attention to the decisions of that conference, because it did not appear at all likely from what they know of the strength of the Labor movement that the efforts of the employers' conference would be successful. If the employers' representatives thought they could "turn back the clock" in regard to social and industrial reform they were making a considerable error.

The agenda committee recommended in connection with the first item on the business paper -it referred to the pledge for Labor candidates for the Federal

Parliament - that the matter should be considered in committee.

The Congress went into committee, and the press was excluded.

After lengthy debate, a committee was appointed to draft a Federal pledge.

SELECTION OF PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES.

Senator Higgs moved -"That subject to the acceptance of the Federal platform and pledge, each State shall control its selection of candidates for the Federal elections."

Mr Spence seconded the motion.

Mr Phillips urged the necessity under the present circumstances of each State being unencumbered at the next elections. In Melbourne next month there would be a plebiscite taken to determine the three candidates for the Senate, and it would be unwise for the Conference to interfere.

Mr Guthrie said it would be within the scope of the State Party to have additional planks so long as they did not alter the spirit of the Federal platform.

The president stated that the position of the various States would be that if they were desirous of appointing men to contest an election such men would be required to adopt the platform carried by the Conference. Matters of local interest and importance could be added to the platform, and on the return of the candidates they would form part of the Federal parliamentary Labor Party.

The motion was carried.

THE FISCAL QUESTION

On the motion of Mr Price, seconded by Mr Croft, it was resolved -"That all Labor candidates, shall have a free hand on the fiscal question.

The conference adjourned until 10am on the following day.

THE FEDERAL PLEDGE

After considering the proposal by the Executive of the Political Labor League (N.S.W.) respecting the pledge to be signed by all Labor candidates for the Federal Parliament, the Conference adopted the following pledge:-"I hereby pledge myself not to oppose the candidate selected by the recognized political organization, and if elected to do my

utmost to carry out the principles embodied in the Federal Labor Platform and on all questions affecting that Platform to vote as a majority of the Parliamentary party may decide at a duly constituted caucus meeting.”

A NATIONAL REFERENDUM

Mr Phillips moved –“That this Conference declares in favor of the amendment of the Constitution providing for the Initiative and the National Referendum.

Mr Beard seconded the motion.

Senator Pearce expressed the hope that delegates would seriously consider the proposal. Were they in favor of unification as against a federation? Were they prepared to send their representatives up for election advocating unification in the smaller States? Under such a condition of things what would become of the smaller States who could always be outvoted by the larger States? A referendum should be held on questions about which the States had surrendered their rights, but Labor representation should not be fettered by agreeing to a mass referendum in view of the very positive statement made by their constituents that they would not give up State rights. He moved as an amendment –“That the Constitution be amended to provide for a national referendum on the tariff and the handing over of industrial legislation to the Federal Parliament.”

Mr Coneybeer seconded the amendment. It would not be wise to adopt the resolution as drafted by the Political Labor Council of Victoria.

Senator De Largie pointed out that the Labor vote was strongest in the smaller States. Tasmania had two Labor members out of eleven Parliamentary representatives, South Australia two out of thirteen, West Australia four out of eleven, Queensland seven out of fifteen, Victoria three out of 29 and New South Wales six out of 32. So that it was owing to the smaller States that they had obtained their present democratic legislation. He would support Senator Pearce’s amendment.

Mr Holliday advocated having a referendum on all questions which did not affect State rights.

Mr McGrath pointed out that the smaller States returned the most democratic members. If the resolution was a democratic proposal, should it not find favor in such States? The Conference should stand firm on the question of introducing a referendum. It was a question of principle and should have their first claim.

Mr Batchelor could not see that the referendum was a democratic principle under existing conditions. The people of the several States were split up on question of State interests. When the Conference was prepared to vote for amalgamation or unification he was prepared to speak in favor of a referendum, but not until then. On a matter where opinions were so divided it would be better to wait until the Federal scheme was placed in such a position that a referendum would be acceptable.

Mr Price was in favor of the proposition, because he wished to bring about unification. State boundaries should be wiped out. Economy urged that State Government should be abolished and the legislation placed in the hands of the Parliament of Australia.

Senator Higgs believed that municipal bodies and State Parliaments should deal with their special matters, while the Federal Government remained entrusted with national subjects. The Federal Parliament might not be the democratic body in the future that it was at present. (the President pointed out that they were discussing not unification but a referendum). Mr Price had talked of the abolition of State Parliaments. He (the speaker) was opposed to unification. He agreed that the referendum should be taken on particular matters, such as had been indicated. To submit Queensland and West Australia to the vote of Victoria, a State run by the Kyabram conservatives and the ‘Age’ and ‘Argus,’ would be unfair.

Mr George Black said that when the democratic party had opposed the Federal constitution, it was because the question of State rights took away the decision of free subjects from a majority of the people and placed it in the hands of groups which by reasons of geographical boundaries were called States. They now proposed to rule

on democratic lines and take away government by artificial boundaries, placing the ruling of the people of Australia in the hands of the people of Australia proportionately to number and not with regard to boundaries, hills, swamps or geographical considerations. He believed when entering the Federation that they were to be brought into a bond of brotherhood. He did not regard the matter in a parochial light, nor could they take such a view of the matters with which they had been entrusted. If they carried a motion referring industrial questions to a referendum a Government could escape dealing with urgent questions by saying that they desired to leave them to a referendum of the people.

Mr Colborne stated that the people of the outside districts of Queensland found that their interests were not so well looked after unless the Government was situated close to them at a point where geographical conditions allowed their desires to be clearly understood. He supported a referendum, and hoped the question of defence would be included. The time was coming when Australia would be asked to speak on that question. Mr Phillips thought it an absurdity to say that after allowing initiative without restriction the referendum should not be taken except on such matters as the conservative party might graciously allow. The amendment was lost.

Senator Higgs moved as a further amendment the addition after the word "referendum" of the following words "and any question excepting the amendment of the Constitution." If the Conference accepted his amendment, it would not be possible for the conservatives in Victoria to come forward with a proposal to take a referendum of the people of Australia regarding representation in the Senate. They might take a referendum on questions affecting the Senate or the House of Representatives, and with their one and a quarter millions and the one and a quarter millions of New South Wales outvote all the small States, which were more democratic than the larger States. Federation would never have been accomplished but for the promise of equal representation in the Senate.

Mr Batchelor seconded Senator Higgs' amendment. What was the good of the Labor representatives accepting the motion when the mass of the people were opposed to the proposition.

Mr Croft declared that West Australia need not agree to the proposal if the Conference did so. Eighteen months ago West Australia put forward a State platform which was now passed into legislation. That State should receive consideration.

The amendment was lost by 12 to 10.

Mr Colborne moved that the Conference proceed with the next business.

Mr Batchelor, in seconding the motion. Stated that as there was such a division of opinion it would be disastrous to place the proposal moved by Mr Phillips on the platform, though they might differ as to the subjects to which it should be applied. The subject could be brought up at a later stage, when an amicable understanding could be arrived at.

Mr McGrath pointed out that the pledge decided that candidates must be bound by a majority: yet they were resorting to an expedient to evade decision.

Senator Higgs considered the proceedings showed the importance of the pledge they had drawn up. Mr Colborne's proposition was the best way out of the trouble.

Mr Colborne's motion was carried by 14 to 8.

INDUSTRIAL LEGISLATION

Mr Tudor moved—"That all industrial legislation be taken over by the Federal Government." They all knew it was impossible at present for the Federal Parliament to fix uniform industrial legislation. Those opposed to them were raising the bogey that they were handicapped by the position of employers in other States. It would be impossible to give effect to the proposal without alteration of the Constitution. It would be easier to attain their object through the Federal Parliament than through Upper Houses of the various States. It would be to the interest of the workers to have uniform industrial legislation due regard being given of course, to the several States.

Mr A.A. Kirkpatrick seconded the motion.

Senator Higgs moved as an amendment—"That in the opinion of this Conference an effort should be made by the various State Parliaments to secure the assimilation for all industrial legislation throughout the Commonwealth." He objected to all industrial legislation be handed over to the Federal Parliament, because such a course would be a blow in Local Government. Many workers in Victoria objected to the Wages Boards. Some in New South Wales did not care for the Arbitration Act, while many men in other States had not made up their minds on these questions. Certain matters should be left to the State Parliaments.

Mr Beard thought a better plan would be to give the subject to the Federal Parliament: that would result in the benefit of States which at present stated that they stood in a disadvantageous position as compared to other States on various industrial matters.

The President stated that while they had the conditions of industry governed by the Federal tariff – while it was not possible for the States to interfere with the tariff. It was a most unfair thing for the people generally to allow the manufacturers or employers in other States were compelled to observe proper conditions regarding sanitation, hours, and wages etc. The conditions should be equalized.

Mr T.D. Richards could not support the proposal. The Federal authorities belated position made them more difficult of approach. N.S.W. had gained a great deal from the State Governments, and if other States were not so well situated it was largely due to their apathy.

Mr Kirkpatrick supported the motion.

Mr Guthrie, speaking for South Australia, said uniformity of such legislation would not be obtained while they had an Upper House, the members of which were elected on a property basis. They should have such matters referred to a Parliament composed of Houses elected on the basis of one adult, one vote. Prior to 1900 no State was so well organized in favor of democratic legislation, but they had been crippled by the extension of the franchise to women. An alteration in the Constitution would be necessary, and if, as had been stated, the majority of the States were in favor of such a development he

asked the representatives to prove that statement by voting for the motion.

Mr McGrath opposed the amendment.

The executive bodies of all the States were run by the employers of the manufacturing classes. If the Peacock Government had remained in power an Arbitration Act and advanced factory legislation would have been introduced in Victoria, but the employers, foreseeing the intention, turned out the Government, and by the expenditure of unlimited money and through the medium of the daily papers put in power the most conservative Government Victoria ever had. The Federal Parliament was more in sympathy with the workers, and their hope was to be found in that direction.

Mr Batchelor strongly supported the motion. A continuance of the present legislation would result in some of the States becoming hotbeds of sweating. It had been said that although democratic at present, the Federal House would not be so in the future. But as the industrial classes had the votes would it not become just what they desired it to become? They had an opportunity of placing industrial legislation where it could be handled by the people, and the only way to do that was to hand it over to the Federal Government.

Mr Coneybeer, while not anxious to hand over too much to the Federal Government, recognized that such a course as suggested by the mover of the motion was the only way of obtaining democratic legislation. He recognized that, owing to climactic conditions, the rate of wages might differ in the States, but he wished to see the matter given to a body that would give fair play.

Mr Macdonnell thought they might let the matter remain in its present position for a little time. The Federal Parliament, like a new broom, had swept clean, but it might not do so in the future. He believed that State Parliaments were more democratic than a Federal Parliament. If one State started cutting wages it would find such action boomerang on it. The cry about capital leaving the State was an empty one.

Mr Black argued that the Federal body might not always be of a democratic character. It might become even less

proposal. He held that a great deal of good could be obtained by the Unions arriving at agreements with employers. The resolution said nothing about conciliation.

Mr Croft deemed that leaving out the word conciliation did not give a Court power to register as an award an agreement arrived at by conciliatory measures.

Mr Black thought the whole difficulty might easily be got over. Arbitration was on its trial, while conciliation had been a failure. To meet Mr Guthrie and Mr Groft they might consider the advisability of the committee drawing up a motion which would provide for their objections. The N.S.W. Act provided for the registration of voluntary agreements.

Senator De Largie moved as an amendment the inclusion of the words "conciliation and" before "Arbitration Act."

Mr Guthrie seconded the proposal.

The amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried.

LAWYERS AND ARBITRATION

Mr Spence moved—"That lawyers be excluded from the Federal arbitration Court of established."

Mr Beard seconded the motion.

Senator Higgs did not favour the proposition, which indicated a weakness on the side of the Labor Party. They had some members of the Labor Party who were lawyers. Were they to exclude Mr Hughes? They had to go to lawyers in dealing with Acts of parliament. Some of the best friends of the reform movement had been and were lawyers. He opposed the motion.

Mr Macdonnell was sorry to see the motion not carried unanimously. He was satisfied lawyers would act for evil in connection with the Arbitration Court. He acknowledged that the Union secretary by reason of his work would have an advantage over the employer, but very soon those people would have their secretaries to represent them.

The motion was carried, the only dissident being Senator Higgs.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Mr Kirkpatrick moved—"That Conference urge the State legislators to pass

Workmen's Compensation Bills to provide for compensation for injuries sustained in industrial occupations."

Mr Price seconded the motion, which was carried.

NATIONALIZING MONOPOLIES.

Senator Higgs moved—"That the nationalization of monopolies be a plank in the labor platform: When an industry became a monopoly and competition was destroyed the nation should take over that industry. Members knew of Australian monopolies in the tobacco trade. Then they had the Victorian tramway system, which charged 50 per cent higher than the Sydney system. The same thing obtained in Perth and Brisbane.

Mr Spence seconded the motion. There were many industries that should be taken over by State Governments or municipal bodies. The lighting of Sydney for example should be controlled by the municipality.

Mr Macdonnell thought the motion should not be on the business paper. The Federal Parliament had nothing to do with land or State railways, and he failed to see how it could have anything to do with monopolies. They did not want vague generalities about monopolies but practical proposals that their people could understand and deal with. He moved—"that they proceed with the next business."

There being no seconder, the motion lapsed, and the motion was carried.

THE BONUS QUESTION

Senator De Largie moved—"That Conference urges the reservation to States of bonuses to ironworks and other industries." There was no vested interest in the trade that need be given consideration by the Conference. There was only room in Australia for one ironworks, and if a private company obtained a hold it would become a most objectionable form of monopoly. The Government railways would be at the mercy of a private company. For that reason the industry should be reserved to the State Governments if not the Federal Government. No other trade was so laborious, and those employed in it were forced to work for 10s per week unless they had a complete organization. In the

West of Scotland where immense wealth was obtained from the industry, the pauper rate was higher than in any other part of the kingdom. As the industry could not be established in Australia unless the people put their hands in their pockets, it should be retained for them, so that they might receive the profits resulting from the use of their money.

Mr Dwyer seconded the motion.

Mr Guthrie would support the motion on certain conditions. But would Senator De Largie not grant bonuses to people for opening up the country? Would the mover consent to strike out the words 'and other industries.' To test the matter he moved in that direction.

Senator Higgs seconded the amendment. Sugar growers were given a rebate, which amounted to a bonus, and other industries would from time to time require assistance.

Senator De Largie accepted the amendment.

Senator Pearce suggested that the ironworks to be granted a bonus should be specified. "Ironworks" covered more than the production of raw iron. He asked Senator De Largie to accept a suggestion that the motion be framed to specify the manufacture of pig iron and steel rails.

Senator De Largie accepted the suggestion, and the motion was worded "than any Bonus Bill for the encouragement of the manufacture of pig iron and steel rails be framed to ensure that bonuses be only paid to State-owned industries" and carried.

Senator Pearce moved—"That bonuses should on no account be given to private enterprise.

Mr Tudor would vote against the motion, which he held should not be included in the platform.

The motion was defeated/

The Conference adjourned until 10am the following day.

THIRD DAY-DEC. 3.

The Conference resumed its sittings at 10am.

MISLEADING PRESS STATEMENT.

The president stated that before proceeding with the business on the notice paper, he wished to allude to some

incorrect representations respecting the Conference appearing in that day's issue of the "Sydney Morning Herald." He referred to a leading article in that paper commenting on the week of the Conference, in which the writer had altogether misunderstood two important points. After referring to the solidarity of the Party, it was set out that each State was asked to control its candidates for the Federal Parliament. The 'Herald' left out two words which were of importance in connections with the resolution viz., that each State should control "the selection" of its candidates. The newspaper proceeded to affirm that members were required to vote solidly on any question affecting the fate of a Government. Such words, they would remember, were omitted from the proposed pledge, which referred to the "Labor Platform," not "the fate of a Government." He thought the "Herald" should be written to, pointing out the misrepresentation that had taken place. It was decided to communicate with the newspaper in question.

PROTECTING AUSTRALIAN SHIPPING.

Mr Guthrie moved—"That the Conference urge the enactment of Federal navigation laws providing for (a) protection of Australian shipping against unfair competition; (b) the registration of all vessels engaged in the coastal trade; (c) efficient manning of vessels; (d) the proper supply of life-saving and other equipment; (e) the regulation of hours and conditions of work; (f) proper accommodation for passengers and seamen; (g) proper loading gear and inspection of same. Special protection was necessary for seamen whose occupation was a very dangerous one. There were 241,000 men engaged in shipping, and the death rate was 2200, or more than in the much smaller number engaged in what were called dangerous occupations. At present there was keen competition in the passenger traffic, the amount of money given to subsidised companies being over 100,100 per annum. The intercolonial companies were improving their accommodation, and with the help of legislation would be enabled to obtain the whole of the coastal trade. To

protect Australian boats, no vessel should be allowed to engage directly or indirectly in the coastal trade unless the vessel so engaged was under Australian articles, and had an Australian register. Port dues on Australian steamers carrying white crews could either be reduced to a minimum or abolished, and a Federal stamp duty equal to the sum lost to the revenue by such action placed on passenger tickets.

Senator Pearce seconded the motion.

Mr Phillips moved, as an amendment, for the enactment of Federal navigation law providing for the exclusion of foreign competition with Inter-State shipping. That would cover everything contained in the motion.

Mr Beard seconded the amendment.

Mr Guthrie asked Mr Phillips to withdraw his amendment. They wanted more than the exclusion of foreign shipping. They wanted protection for passengers and seamen and proper supply of loading gear. Mr Phillips declined to withdraw the amendment. Which was lost.

The motion was then carried unanimously.

A WHITE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

Senator Higgs moved—"That the conference include the maintenance of a White Australia in the Labor platform." They all knew the conditions surrounding the Kanaka traffic and in the south there was no opposition, but in the north it would be made a test question at the next elections by the Queensland Government, who wished to return delegates who would try to secure a continuance of black labor. The northern people asked the assistance of the southern workers in fighting the effort that would be made in Queensland. Mr Kirkpatrick seconded the motion, which was carried.

OLD AGE PENSIONS

Mr Hinchcliffe moved—"That Conference is of opinion that Old Age Pensions should be retained as a plank in the platform."

Senator Pearce, in seconding the motion. Denied that the Labor Party believed that such a subject would have to remain in the background until the removal of the Braddon Blot. Mr Reid said they would have to wait for old age pensions, but it was not so. They could tax incomes,

absentee landlords, and impose other direct taxation that would give sufficient revenue for the purpose. It was not as Mr Reid said "a glittering bribe." Neither the Braddon Blot nor the fiscal question would direct their attention from old age pensions.

The motion was carried.

FEDERAL SYSTEM OF INSURANCE

Senator De Largie moved—"That Federal Life and Fire Insurance be placed on the platform." Under government control these would yield a considerable amount of revenue.

Mr Beard seconded the motion.

Senator Higgs asked the mover to leave out the questions of fire insurance, which was a matter that affected local government. He moved as an amendment—"That fire insurance be eliminated from the motion.

Mr O'Dwyer seconded the amendment.

Mr Batchelor pointed out that the fire insurance companies had a uniform rate for risks. The matter was really a monopoly, and in view of the immense area of the Commonwealth the control of fire insurance would prove a payable undertaking for the Federal Government and would give the people a considerable reduction in the rates that were at present charged for fire policies.

Mr Coneybeer supported the proposal respecting life assurance, but was doubtful about including fire insurance.

The amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried.

A COMMONWEALTH BANK

Senator Higgs moved—"That a Commonwealth Bank of deposit and issue be established, the directors of which shall only be appointed and dismissed by Act of Parliament." They should declare their opinion as to how far such a bank should be beyond the control of politicians. The directors should be in the same position as Supreme Court Judges. The Queensland national Bank at one time was almost a State institution, with the result that politicians obtained overdrafts without any security. It would not be necessary to include the subject in their fighting platform, but to simply declare it as part of their policy.

Mr Coneybeer seconded the motion.

Mr Watson said the question opened up such a large issue that the Conference should say on what lines the bank should be established. They should say that State developments should be managed quite apart from influence, and that while Parliament should lay down the policy on which they should be conducted that the details should be on business lines so far as management was concerned. They could not be too soon in declaring what their feelings were in that regard. They should include in their declared policy a statement that they did not want political influence, which was sapping the success of the Labor Party in New South Wales, and especially in regard to the Advances to Settlers Act, was likely to destroy a measure that was of immense benefit to the people of Australia.

The motion was carried.

THE NAVAL SUBSIDY

Senator Pearce moved—"That this Conference opposes the proposal for an increased subsidy to the Imperial Government for the maintenance of an Imperial squadron, and considers that any money available for naval defence should be used in the formation of a navy that would be owned and controlled by the Commonwealth." They should express themselves definitely on the proposed expenditure on the navy and not simply pass a bald resolution. They should state why they opposed a subsidy, viz., because it was not a contribution for the defence of Australia. They would be doing their duty to the Empire by efficiently defending Australia. No danger that could threaten Australia would necessitate the navy being sent to some distant part of the world. For the present contribution they had been getting a set of obsolete vessels. He had it from a naval officer that with the exception of the flagship not one of their present vessels would be of any use at all in time of war.

Mr Guthrie seconded the motion. By keeping the proposed 200,000 for their own use they could have a permanent ship fully manned off 3200 tons, 320 feet in length 42 feet in beam, and of 12,000 nominal horse power, and, in addition, four cruisers: one of which could be

stationed at each port and used in peace time for the training of men. Great Britain had been building ships for which they could not find sufficient men.

Mr McGowen asked was he to understand that the Conference favored the withdrawal of the present subsidy.

The President understood the motion to mean that on the expiration of the present arrangements the Labor Party would oppose any similar arrangements in the future.

Mr McGowen pointed out that the 106,000 would have to be paid for a definite period. It would take four years to manufacture the vessels mentioned by Mr Guthrie, and all that time the 100,000 would have to be paid. Under those circumstances how much money would be available as mentioned in the motion. Australia to-day was not protected by the Australian Squadron. It was the whole of the British navy that gave moral protection. If the Federal Parliament established a sinking fund with a view of ultimately getting an Australian Squadron, he would be with them, but to say to the members of the Federal Parliament "refuse to continue the present subsidy" was unwise and unpracticable.

Mr Phillips moved, and Mr Guthrie seconded- "That the Conference proceed with the next business."

The motion was lost.

Mr Price agreed with Mr Phillips that England could be trusted to protect her tribute and commerce, but Australia had to protect herself against the strong cruiser coming along and demanding toll.

Senator Pearce argued that the Conference should express its desire for an Australian navy. The enemy that might vitally affect the interests of the Australian workers was Japan.

The motion was carried, Messrs Phillips, McGrath and Beard voting in the negative.

FOR DEFENCE NOT OFFENCE

Senator Higgs moved—"That the policy of the Commonwealth be defensive and not offensive." Major General Hutton proposed that the military system should be on an offensive and defensive basis, and his idea was that Australian soldiers should be called upon for service in any part of the world where Great Britain

might be at variance with another Power. They could work out their destiny best on a defensive basis. So long as they merely defended their hearths and homes he felt sure no civilised Power would interfere with them

Mr Holliday seconded the motion, which was carried

THE MILITARY VOTE

Senator Higgs moved—"That in the opinion of the Conference the total military expenditure of the Commonwealth should be reduced to the amount expended during the year immediately preceding June 30th, 1899."

Mr O'Dwyer seconded the motion.

Mr Batchelor opposed the proposal. They could not say what the amount should be.

The President thought they might make a mistake if they specified the amount to be expended on defence. They wanted a declaration in their policy that the army should be one of citizens, not a standing army. Every man should understand the use of his rifle, and in that connection it would be unwise to place any limit on the amount to be spent in national defence. They could express their dissatisfaction at money being spent on ornamental services instead of a practical national defence.

Mr Holliday moved as an amendment—"That the Conference favors reduction of military expenditure to a minimum consistent with efficiency.

Mr Pearce seconded the amendment, which was lost.

Senator Higgs was anxious to see military expenditure kept down to half a million per annum. The Boers did not spend that amount in order to be placed in a position to hold up 250,000 of England's soldiers. The motion was then carried.

LIBERALISING THE ELECTORAL LAW.

Senator De Largie moved—"That the Conference urges further liberalisation of electoral law in the direction of allowing members of the Federal and State Parliaments to contest elections for any Australian Parliament but not to hold dual positions.

Mr O'Dwyer seconded the motion.

Mr Coneybeer supported the proposal.

Mr Tudor pointed out that all the States had passed an Act requiring Federal candidates to resign before seeking election to the House of Representatives.

Mr Richards asked what was the position of the State employee in regard to elections.

The President said the constitution provided that no one holding an office of profit under the Crown could sit in Parliament.

Mr Richards considered the law should be liberalised so that Government employees might seek election. Amongst such men there were many ardent supporters of the Labor cause.

Mr McGowen strongly supported the principle underlying the motion, but he wished to move an amendment to omit the words "but not to hold dual positions". Those words were inconsistent with the principle of the resolution. The motion recommended itself because of the abolition of the restrictions on either Federal or State voters limiting their choice. Although no man might desire to sit in both Parliaments it was the right of the people to have a representative in both Houses if they so desired. If the people did not ask a man to resign a State position to sit in the Senate, no Conference or Legislature had the right to do so. It was restricting the choice of the people who should be asked to decide the point.

Mr Mc Grath formally seconded the amendment for the purpose of pointing out that the people had full choice when a man placed himself before the electors.

Senator Higgs thought the full text of the resolution was necessary. Mr Ferguson although returned to the Senate, still held his seat in the Legislative Council of Queensland, but he (the speaker) was attacked for holding his State seat for three months in order to provide funds for the election of the candidate who was put up to fight the seat he (the speaker) was giving up.

Mr Holliday stated that the very fact of Senator Higgs retaining his State seat for the period mentioned was found to be a severe handicap to the Labor Party in fighting the election. For that reason the words should be retained in the motion.

Mr Kewley supported the views of the previous speaker.

Mr Kirkpatrick urged that members of the public service should be allowed to contest an election. If returned, of course they would have to resign.

The amendment was lost.

Mr Colborne moved—"That the workers 'State' be eliminated from the motion.

Mr Holliday seconded the amendment, which was lost.

The motion was then carried.

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES ELECTION DEPOSIT.

Mr McGowen moved—"That the Conference urges the omission of the 25 deposit for candidates for the Federal Parliament.

Why should it be necessary for a man to possess it, or 25 to contest an election if the people did not believe that Parliamentary men should have financial standing.

Mr Coneybeer seconded the motion. There should be no money qualification, which might be a big disability to candidates for Parliamentary honors. People said that without a deposit they would have all sorts of candidates putting up for election, but that had not been the experience in South Australia where no deposit was required.

Mr Kewley supported the retention of the deposit provision. In Queensland the organized labor bodies found the deposits, and not in one instance had a deposit on behalf of a Labor candidate been forfeited. Its omission would mean not only the Government candidates bring in the field, but also others not connected with Labor organizations who would run as independents and perhaps split the Labor vote.

Senator Higgs supported the 25 deposit. Otherwise they would have all sorts of candidates being put forward. If a man's friends would not put up the 25, what chance would he have of election?

Mr McGowen did not believe that democrats would oppose his motion. He was surprised that Senator Higgs should say they should go back to the old days of the deposit. If men worked for a candidate, why should he be asked to put up money? They would go back on the interests of democracy if they voted for the deposit. It was a matter of principle

whether the money qualification was 1s. 25 or 100.

The motion was carried by 12 to 10.

PLUMPING AT ELECTIONS.

Senator Higgs moved—"That the Commonwealth electoral law should not insist upon electors voting for the full numbers of Senatorial candidates." They were surely of one mind on such a question. They wanted a provision to give each section of the community a fair show. Mr Colborne seconded the motion.

Senator De Largie pointed out that people, although they were in favor of preferential voting, condemned plumping. The ticket or block vote system gave no preference save to a majority, but the plumping gave a bare minority every change. He moved as an amendment—"That this Conference urge the Federal Parliament to pass as electoral law that will provide for a single system of preferential voting for the Senate." The Government was favorable to such a system and would, he believed, bring in a Bill to provide for such a system.

Senator Pearce seconded the amendment. The preferential system was a scientific method of plumping and was not open to the objections that could be urged against plumping. A man could note for a given number of men, placing them in the order which their merits in his opinion entitled them to. The voice of the minority was entitled to be heard.

Mr Guthrie said that according to the Hare-Spence system of voting it was possible to bring out the men in any order that was desired. The Clarke-Hare system was simply a check on democracy to upset a majority vote. They werenot ready for a system of preferential voting.

The amendment was lost.

The motion was then carried.

TAKING OVER THE RAILWAYS.

Mr Batchelor moved—"That in the opinion of this Conference railways should be taken over by the Commonwealth." He believed that such a course would give better reports to the public generally, and portions of States which at present were not reached by rail would be brought within comparatively easy reach. It would prevent the granting of ninety million

acres of land in the Northern Territory by a Government that had temporarily gone mad.

Mr Holliday seconded the motion. In Queensland it would be possible, according to the Government, to get rid of their debts by selling the railways. Such a proposal should be nipped in the bud.

Senator Higgs thought the public of the Commonwealth would want more experience of Federation before handing over the railways. An amendment might be moved—"That this Conference expresses itself in favor of the construction and ownership of railways by the States."

Mr Richards recognised that mistakes had been made by the States in connection with railways, but while the New South Wales management might not be perfect, he doubted whether Federal ownership would be a change for the better. Was it likely that the people would hand over the settlement of questions about having railways to the places out back to the Federal Government? The five or six bodies at present entrusted with the management of their railway systems would better safe guard the interests of the employees than one Federal authority.

Mr Price, while favoring handing over the railways to the Commonwealth, believed that such a course could not be taken unless the debts of the States were federalised. He recognised the danger of the railways being taken over by syndicates as had been suggested in Queensland. While he was not prepared to say outright that he would vote for the motion, he confessed that his inclinations were growing in that direction.

Mr Phillips said the railways were Australian railways, not systems belonging to the several States. Sooner or later they would have to accept a uniform gauge, and the sooner they undertook that work the better. He supported federalising the railways, also the rivers which in many instances were the properties of two or three States/

Mr George Black suggested that the two subjects railways and rivers, being so dissimilar should not be associated but dealt with in separate motions.

The motion was then carried.

Mr Phillips moved—"That the rivers be placed under Federal control."

Mr McGrath seconded the motion.

Senator Higgs said they would control the rivers in all cases where river settlers attempted to take water from the River Murray.

Mr Price moved as an amendment "That this Conference urge federalisation of the River Murray and the locking of the same."

Mr Colborne objected to springing fresh subjects on the Conference.

Senator Pearce protested against the conference dealing with such an important matter without notice.

The President ruled that Mr Phillips could bring on his motion after the motion dealing with the federalising of main trunk lines had been discussed.

Mr Batchelor did not wish to force a vote on such a large question as the rivers. Through diverting the water from the tributaries of the Murray, the river from the mouth to the Murray bridge was salt, with the result that a great quantity of land had gone out of cultivation. The subject was too large and too important to consider at the present stage.

Mr Coneybeer moved—"That the debate be adjourned."

It was decided to proceed with the next business.

TAXING UNIMPROVED LAND VALUES

Mr Holliday moved—"That this Conference affirm the justice of taxation of unimproved values of land, on incomes, and on absentees, and urges these forms of direct taxation."

Mr Kirkpatrick seconded the motion, which was carried.

FOREIGN LOANS

Senator Higgs moved—"That the Conference urges that provision be made against foreign borrowing excepting for the conversion of State loans."

Mr Colborne seconded the motion, which was carried.

FEDERAL TREASURY NOTES

Mr Croft moved—"That public works be carried out by Federal Treasury notes."

Mr Colborne seconded the motion.

The President asked the Conference not to discuss the motion.

It was decided to pass on to the next business.

On the motion of Senator Higgs, it was decided that all Loan Bills should contain statutory provisions for sinking funds.

THE FEDERAL CAPITAL.

Senator Higgs moved—"That the site of the Federal Capital should be decided upon as early as possible, and that when selected the same should not be alienated."

Senator De Largie seconded the motion, which was carried.

MEMBERS AND THE MINISTRY.

Senator Pearce moved—"That no member of the Federal Labor Party shall accept office in the Federal Government except with the consent of a duly constituted caucus meeting of the party."

Mr Croft seconded the motion, which was carried.

FEDERAL PATENTS LAW.

Mr Croft moved—"That this Conference urge the enactment of a Federal Patent Law providing for the cheapening and simplifying of registration of patents."

Mr Guthrie seconded the motion, which was carried.

DAY SITTINGS IN PARLIAMENT.

Mr Phillips moved—"That Conference urge that day sittings be held by Parliaments."

Mr Kirkpatrick seconded the motion.

Mr Batchelor pointed out that Ministers could not attend day sittings and also attend to the administration of the departments.

Mr Coneybeer and Mr McGrath supported the motion, which was opposed by Mr O'Dwyer and Senator Pearce, the last speaker urging that the workers should be given opportunity of seeing and hearing what actually took place at Parliament instead of being compelled to rely upon the "cooked" reports of the daily press.

The motion was carried.

A DAILY HANSARD.

Mr Phillips moved—"That the conference urges the publication of a daily Hansard." Such a publication would save the Government a large amount of money that

was now paid to the daily press for advertisements and give the people a fair record of Government and Opposition policy.

Mr McGrath seconded the motion.

Senator Higgs sympathised with the Victorian delegates, who knew that Victorian politicians had to approach Mr David Syme on their hands and knees. A daily Hansard was practical and desirable. Mr Holliday did not think any good could be obtained by a daily Hansard.

Mr Macdonell agreed with the last speaker. For six months in one year Hansard would not be published; that would militate against business people using it as an advertising medium. He was not aware that the public rushed Hansard. They should combine and bring out a paper devoted to the Labor cause. It would be a waste of time to advocate a daily Hansard.

Mr Batchelor could not see the advantage of a daily over a weekly Hansard.

The motion was carried by 11 to 5.

THE LABOR PLATFORM.

On the motion of Mr Guthrie, seconded by Mr Croft, it was decided to appoint the President, Vice-President, and the Secretary as a committee to embody the resolutions adopted by the Conference as a labor platform and report to the conference the following day.

The Conference adjourned until 11am the following day.

FOURTH DAY.-DECEMBER 4.

ADOPTION OF A FEDERAL PLATFORM.

The committee appointed to submit a report respecting the platform to be adopted by the Labor party recommended the following planks for the consideration by the Conference:-

FIGHTING PLATFORM

1. Maintenance of a White Australia.
2. Compulsory Arbitration.
3. Old Age Pensions.
4. Nationalization of Monopolies.
5. Citizens Defence Force.

6. Restriction of Public Borrowing
7. Restriction of Public Borrowing.
8. Navigation Laws.

On the motion of Mr Hinchcliffe, seconded by Mr Colborne, the platform was adopted.

GENERAL PLATFORM

The general platform was considered and adopted in the following form:-

1. Maintenance of a White Australia.
2. Compulsory Arbitration to settle industrial disputes, with provision for the exclusion of the legal profession.
3. Old Age Pensions.
4. Nationalization of Monopolies.
5. Citizen Military Force and Australian owned Navy.
6. Restriction on Public Borrowing.
7. Navigation Laws to provide (a) for the protection of Australian shipping against unfair competition; (b) registration of all vessels engaged in the coastal trade; (c) the efficient manning of vessels; (d) the proper supply of life-saving and other equipment; (e) the regulation of hours and conditions of work; (f) proper accommodation for passengers and seamen; (g) proper loading gear and inspection of same.
8. Commonwealth Bank of Deposit and Issue and Life and Fire Insurance Department, the management of each to be free from political influence.
9. Federal patent Law, providing for simplifying and cheapening the registration of patents.
10. Uniform industrial legislation; amendment of Constitution to provide for same.

The resolutions of the Conference were formally adopted, and the Secretary was

instructed to arrange for the printing of the

Fighting platform, general platform resolutions of Conference, conditions of candidature, and minutes of proceedings of the Conference.

It was resolved to distribute copies to the Secretary of the Central Political Organization in each State.

CONDITIONS OF CANDIDATURE

The conditions of candidature were adopted as follows:-

1. That all candidates for the Federal Parliament shall sign the following pledge:

I hereby pledge myself not to oppose the candidate selected by the recognized political labor organization and, if elected, to do my utmost to carry out the principles embodied in the Federal Labor platform and on all questions affecting the platform and vote as a majority of the Parliamentary Party may decide at a duly constituted caucus meeting.

2. That subject to the acceptance of the Federal platform and pledge, each State shall control the selection of its candidates for the Federal Parliament.
3. That all Labor candidates shall have a free hand on the fiscal question.
4. That no member of the Federal Labor Party shall accept office in the Federal Government except with the consent of a duly constituted caucus of the Party.

It was resolved that the Political Labor Council of Victoria be charged with the duty of convening the next political conference to be held in Melbourne, January, 1904.