



Australian Association for the Advancement of the Deaf



REPORT

We have pleasure in submitting the first Report of the Federal Executive of the A.A.A.D.

The present members of the Executive feel that greater importance must be given to matters of policy and outlook than to the bare facts of history. These facts will only be noted to mark progress made.

Requests had come for a period of years from the Deaf leaders in the other States that such an Association should be formed—of the Deaf, by the Deaf, for the Deaf of Australia.

A first meeting was held in Sydney in July, 1931, a prominent worker consented to set the ball rolling.

The framing of the Constitution was undertaken by tried friends of the Deaf, well fitted for the task; it was their fixed intention that every part, amendments, and all business relating to it should be clearly put before the deaf for their verdict.

An invitation was sent to all organisations of the Adult Deaf in Australia and Tasmania to send representatives. The Constitution was circulated for confirmation, amendment, or rejection by the deaf members provisionally enrolled. In March, 1932, delegates met in Sydney, where the finished draft of the Constitution was presented. Branches were formed in N.S.W., Victoria and Queensland; the other States looked on with sympathetic interest and goodwill. In December, 1932, Branch representatives met and elected the Federal Executive and officers—Mr. H. V. S. Hersee, President; Miss M. Overend Wilson, Hon. Sec.-Treasurer; Executive: R. H. Lambert and W. H. Crush (Victoria); E. L. Quinnell and Mrs. S. D. Winn (New South Wales); J. Allardice and G. Harrison (Queensland); and Mr. F. S. Booth, of N.S.W., was co-opted to a seat on the Federal Executive. An opposition organisation for the Deaf, controlled by hearing Committees, immediately came into the field.

In December, 1933, we held our first Congress in Sydney, where the following papers were read:—"Vocational Training for the Deaf"—J. M. Paul; "The Deaf in Their Own Association"—A. G. Eaton; "Thirty Years' Work for the Deaf"—M. Overend Wilson; "The Deaf Citizen"—F. S. Booth. Mr. Frank Martin also spoke on "Trades for the Deaf." A paper on "Liberty and Self-Government for the Deaf," by Mr. W. H. Crush, was held over and published later.

In 1934 objection to the methods used and the need to uphold the provisions of the Constitution created a position in which a new Federal Executive under the Presidency of Mr. A. G. Eaton, with Mr. J. Allardice as Hon. Sec., took over for the remainder of the term till June, 1936.

That the Deaf, not trained in order and procedure, lacking much experience of free association and of working methods, met unforeseen difficulties in the task undertaken is not surprising. Interest and loyalty have helped much to overcome these difficulties.

Looking back on past experience, we must admit that we might have emphasised those accepted definite standards and rules which would have ensured that business would be regularly conducted in accordance with members' decisions recorded in constitutional manner.

It should also be said that not using the full powers of discipline given by the Constitution has handicapped unified action in harmony with the ideals of our policy.

We should not regret that we have had to face defections and other difficulties at the beginning of our life. They have proved the need to introduce proper methods and a spirit of democratic control and co-operation which will become the tradition of our Association.

Addressing itself to business standing over, your Executive learnt from the B.D.D.A. that it does not have affiliations. Application for affiliation with the N.A.D. in America was made, and we are pleased to report that it is now an accomplished fact. The interests that threaten our freedom and development are very much the same in America as here, and we believe that our connection with the N.A.D. will be very much in the interests of the Deaf.

At the 1933 Congress Mr. Eaton brought forward proposals for finance; the members, or Executive, did not take them up.

The present position of our finance is not good. We should not be dependent on special donations to carry on the essential part of our work and meet our liabilities, nor should one Branch be left to bear the responsibility of financing the Federal Executive to such an extent.

We would again ask you to remember that the greatest needs of to-day are these—

1. To gain knowledge bearing on our interests and well-being.
2. To get a good understanding of first class methods or ways of conducting business meetings and affairs.
3. Faithful co-operation—working together to carry out the policy as circulated to you.

We will be judged by our actions. We condemn abusive and autocratic ways applied to the Deaf, and we hold that these, or any irregular and unworthy methods, being used by the deaf cannot benefit the objects of our Association, but only set them back.

Fortunately the time when we were judged by the unauthorised and irregular actions of a few is now passing, and the policy adopted by your Executive is raising us in the respect of open-minded persons interested in the Deaf. We must value the advance made and see to it that we maintain it by loyalty and courtesy.

The first task before us is to carry out an educational programme which will get our members to understand the values and methods which stand in all sections of the community where reason, right, and freedom prevail.

In laying down the office which they took up under such difficult circumstances, your Executive hope that the efforts they have made to introduce an impersonal outlook, better methods, and higher standards will be adopted by those who guide our affairs in future, and throughout our ranks, till respect for our work, our fellow deaf, and our standing, reflects itself in the respect of all who know and work with us.

We renew our belief that the work done during the bringing of the Association through the difficulties of the early years have proved to the deaf what are sound foundations. These will remain for the building of an Association in which liberty and real advancement will bring that understanding of values which will strengthen our cause.

We have had fine service from many friends. Money, thought, labour, have been given to help us in our beginnings. They are an encouragement as well as a service, and what is most pleasing is the faith in us that such kind co-operation shows.

We sincerely thank one and all.

On behalf of the Federal Executive,

J. ALLARDICE,

Hon. Secretary.

President's Message.

Dear Friends,—

In presenting the first Report issued by the Federal Executive, I wish to point out that the present Executive undertook to carry on the work under very trying conditions.

The Association's business had been conducted in irregular manner, the rights of members were being destroyed and the Association "white anted." Our refusal to accept such wrong attitudes to the deaf caused those seeking to continue such policy to do all in their power to break the Association.

The Association has struggled through the crisis because of the loyalty and courage of those who believe in the rights of the deaf. We are honestly seeking to raise it to a standard worthy of the respect of a free and educated deaf people.

The opposition remains, but whatever the future may have for us, we have stood for common justice and rights.

I have to draw your attention to Finance. We are dependent on Queensland deaf and an outside body to maintain the Federal Executive working. Only one-fifteenth of our income is regular income (Federal Dues) and one-fiftieth of income comes from outside Queensland. This should not be so. There has been no expenditure on Socials, etc., only necessary costs—printing, postage and educational literature—have been incurred. The Deaf should do all in their power to improve the condition of our finances at once. It is due to our self respect.

I wish to thank all whose service, goodwill and generosity have made possible the continuance of our effort in the interests of the deaf.

Yours fraternally,

A .G. EATON,

President.