



THE HON. FREDERICK WILLIAM CONEYBEER

1859 - 1950

A political biography

By

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History Department

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master  
of Arts, University of Adelaide,  
February 1968.



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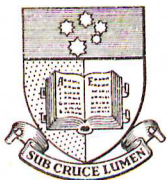
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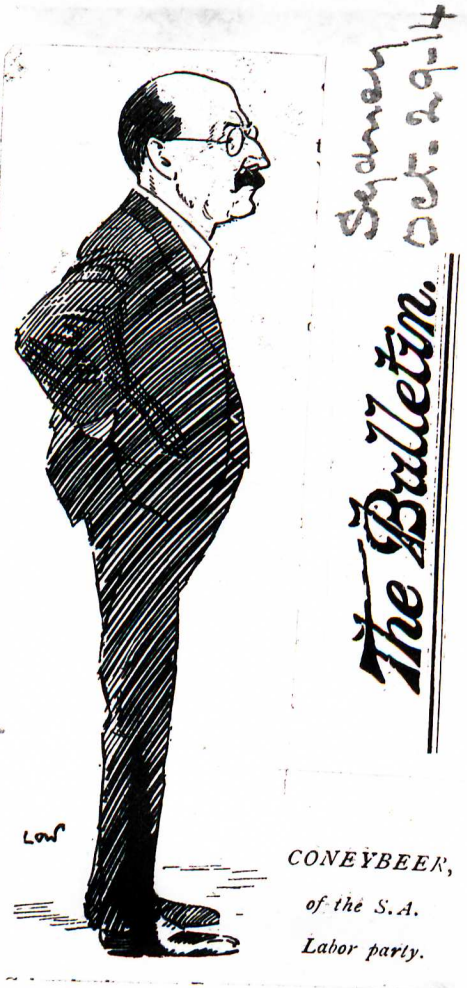
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CONEYBEER,  
of the S.A.  
Labor party.

Low's cartoon of Coneybeer.  
From the Bulletin, 29 Oct.  
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## Illustrations

Low's cartoon of Coneybeer	Frontispiece.
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SUMMARY

This biography traces the political career of the Hon. Frederick William Coneybeer (born 1859, died 1950) from his entry into the industrial labor movement in 1883 to his defeat and retirement from Parliament in 1930. During this time Coneybeer was closely associated with the industrial labor movement and with the early development and growth of the United Labor Party of South Australia. He was one of the nine Labor candidates elected to the House of Assembly in 1893, which date marks the effective beginning of the South Australian Parliamentary Labor Party. For about two years during the period 1908-1912 Coneybeer was Minister of Education, and from 1915 to 1921 he was Speaker of the House of Assembly. In 1917 he left the United Labor Party over the conscription issue and became one of the founders of the National Labor Party. In 1923 he played a part in the negotiations which led to the fusion of the National Labor Party and the Liberal Union into the Liberal Federation of South Australia (from which, in 1933, came the Liberal and Country League).

Coneybeer was of working-class origins (a horse collar-maker by trade) and this biography attempts to illustrate his attitude and response toward the political issues, institutions and personalities of his day, and, at the same time, to show something of the general historical background in which those issues, institutions and personalities existed. In addition,

by frequent reference to or quotation from the large collection of personal diaries and papers which Coneybeer assembled throughout his political life, this biography attempts to look at his career and its context in more personal and immediate terms than would be possible for any other pioneer labor politician - or, for that matter, few political figures at all during the same period.

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Date: 27 February 1968.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. J. M. Tregenza for discussion and advice about the content and structure of this biography. I am also indebted to the United Trades and Labor Council of S.A. and the Australian Labor Party, S.A. Branch, for permission to examine their records, and to Mr. L. Marquis and the staff of the Newspaper Reading Room of the State Library of S.A.

G. L. Fischer.

Note on sources and abbreviations used.

This biography is primarily based on the collection of diaries, correspondence, cuttings books, documents, printed items and illustrations which F. W. Coneybeer assembled in his own life-time.\* This collection is held in the Archives Dept. of the State Library of S.A. where it is designated as PRG22. The collection has been arranged into series, but individual items or pages in these series have not yet all been numbered. For the sake of brevity here, the abbreviation CP (Coneybeer Papers) has been used to cite the collection, followed by the appropriate series number and any further reference available. As Series 1 (Coneybeer's diaries) has been used extensively in this work, the word Diary only has been used to cite it. Date references have been given to diary entries except where the entry is of incidental interest only.

Other major sources used are as follows. The records of the United Trades and Labor Council of S.A., designated in the Archives Dept. as SRG1 (microfilm) and here abbreviated to UTLC. The records of the Australian Labor Party, S.A. Branch, designated in the Archives Dept. as SRG73 (microfilm) and here abbreviated to ULP. (Prior to 1917, the Australian Labor Party, S.A. Branch, was known as the United Labor Party of S.A. The abbreviation ULP has been used throughout this work to avoid possible confusion.) Parliamentary Debates of the South Australian House of Assembly, here abbreviated to PDHA. Parliamentary Papers presented to the South Australian Parliament, here abbreviated to PP.

Additional sources are cited in full in foot-notes to the work. A bibliography of manuscript and printed sources will be found at the end of the work.

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\* In Who's who (London, 1935), Coneybeer described one of his recreations as 'collecting public and political records'.

I am inclined to think it [an interest in politics] was a part of my paternal inheritance, for my dear old father (now passed away), who, though a hard-working man, was a deep reader and an earnest political student, and an enthusiastic follower of the late Sir Henry Parkes.

The Hon. F.W. Coneybeer,  
quoted in The Nationalist,  
3 October 1919.

[The United Labor Party was] on its beam ends for a substitute, [and] dropped on the genial song-singing Coneybeer.

[Newspaper gossip, 1907.]