

THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Editor : Dr Arnold Hunt
13 Alfreda Street
BRIGHTON 5048

PHONE : 8296 9538

NEWSLETTER

NO. 63

NOVEMBER, 1996

NOVEMBER LECTURE
and
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The next meeting of the Society will be held on Friday, 15 November at 8 p.m. in the lounge of Pilgrim Church, 12 Flinders Street, Adelaide.

The speaker will be
Dr Nell Gunson
of the Australian National University, Canberra. His subject will be :

**"Ecumenism By Default:
the contribution of the London
Missionary Society to the
wider church in the Pacific".**

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held prior to the lecture. Revision of the Constitution will be considered at that meeting.

THE CHURCHMAN AS POLITICIAN GLEN GARDINER PEARSON

by Stan Parr

'Apolitical' was the word used by a contemporary to describe Sir Glen Pearson's political career. Born at Kadina in 1907, Pearson won a scholarship to attend Prince Alfred College. Later he farmed near Sandilands on Yorke Peninsula. He had lost his father, killed in France in 1916 as a member of the AIF, and the widow was left to bring up her four sons.

Public Service

Pearson's public service was manifest in various fields. He took up land at Cockaleechee on Lower Eyre Peninsula in 1935 and, in 1939, he was appointed platoon officer in the Cummins-Yeelanna Volunteer Defence Corps. He held this position until his enlistment in the intelligence section of the RAAF in early 1942. Pearson served in the South-West Pacific Area for some time and was discharged as a Flight Lieutenant in 1945. From 1946 to 1951 he served as an executive member of the South Australian Wheat Growers Association and from 1948 to 1955 as a grower representative on the Australian Barley Board. Pearson was also a dedicated Freemason, serving as Worshipful Master of his local lodge in 1950.

Parliamentary Duties

On the election of his brother Rex to the Australian Senate, Pearson succeeded him in the rural seat of Flinders and quickly made himself conspicuous in the South Australian House of Assembly as an able advocate for the rural population of the State. In particular, the soldier settlers of Lower Eyre Peninsula found in him an effective voice in their struggle for equitable rentals on their properties.

Ministerial Career

On the sudden death of Arthur Christian in 1956, Pearson assumed the agricultural and forestry portfolios in the Playford Ministry. As Minister of Agriculture, his experience as a member of the executive of the Wheat Growers Association and member of the Barley Board was soon evident. With the retirement of long-time Works Minister,

Malcolm McIntosh, in 1958, Pearson became Minister of Works, Marine and Aboriginal Affairs until the fall of the Playford Government at the 1965 election.

Deputy Premier

It was only natural at a time when 26 of the 39 Assembly seats were held by country members that a relatively young Pearson, with his great knowledge of matters rural, his increasing experience as a member of the Cabinet, and his Protestant background in the Liberal Party, should be groomed by Premier Playford for Deputy Leadership of the Party. So, on the death of World War I veteran Cecil Hincks, he was elected Deputy Leader of the Party and Deputy Premier of South Australia.

Pearson served in this capacity until 1965 and again from 1968 until his retirement in 1970. During the latter period, as Deputy Premier under Steele Hall, he served as Treasurer and Minister of Housing.

As Treasurer, he was orthodox in his approach to fiscal matters. As a supporter of the Keynesian theory, he believed in 'priming the pump' in times of recession. Although such a policy may have seemed effective over 25 years ago, one wonders how effective would such a policy be in these times of almost 10 percent unemployment across the board.

Social Issues

But it was on social legislation that Sir Glen Pearson stood as an uncompromising supporter of Playford and all that Playford stood for in this field. This was never more evident than during the period 1965-68 after Playford had been defeated and the Labour Party took to the Government benches for the first time in 32 years. While many Liberal members deserted Playford and his policies of 6 o'clock closing of liquor bars and of limited gambling facilities, the Methodist local preacher stood firm in his opposition to the relaxation of these standards.

Totalisator Agency Board

When dealing with the setting up of the TAB by the Government, Pearson made his views plain in no uncertain manner. In the second reading debate on the Bill, he said:

The honorable member also says that Mr Smith could not care less whether his neighbour bets or whether he bets illegally. If that is so, it is a heavy indictment of public morality. However, I do not believe that it is true. I think that there is ample evidence in this community, as in every other, that most people have a substantial concern for the welfare of their fellow creatures. That is evident from the responses to all sorts of worthy causes and the willingness of vast sections of the community to give all help possible to their fellow man in time of need. This evidences the widespread concern of the community as a whole for every member of it and I do not accept the honourable member's statement that we could not care less about what our neighbours do. Even if some people could not care less (and I suppose there are some), we in this Parliament cannot adopt that attitude. I do not think we can responsibly say that we could not care less, and I am sure that we do not say that.

Later in his speech he quoted the Rev Irwin Vogt on the issue of the TAB:

It is true, of course, that a Government cannot reform the nation by act of Parliament - but it is equally true that no Government should count itself free to introduce legislation which legalizes what is ethically, and in this case, also economically, unsound.

Hotel Hours

In the matter of hotel opening hours and the age at which young people could drink legally, Pearson made his position crystal clear. On a proposal to lower the drinking age, he said:

I will do whatever I can to defeat the proposals to reduce the age of drinking in public bars.

Pearson showed his concern for young people in the community thus:

I am particularly concerned for the welfare of the younger girls in our community in this regard. I believe there is no doubt that many indiscretions of youth are related to the use of alcohol. One could develop this

argument at length and talk about the effects of environment and all the rest of it. . . . I believe that many of the difficulties in which young people find themselves are undoubtedly caused by indiscretions committed under the excitement of alcohol. 3

On the second reading of the Places of Public Entertainment Act Amendment Bill, introduced by the Dunstan Labour Government to relax restrictions on Sunday activities, Pearson had this to say:

I do not want to say that my judgment should be paramount in these matters. If people want to do these things that is not unreasonable, but these are not urgent matters that must be decided by Parliament now. They are not matters on which the churches as a whole have deliberated sufficiently in order to come to satisfactory conclusions, and they are matters that could well be left alone until they have been distilled through the minds of the public and until conclusions have been reached. I oppose this particular clause but not in the hope that it will not be revived at some future time. Although I support the urgent provisions, I am not prepared to support those provisions which are not urgent and which relate to controversial matters.

Here again was the voice of reason pleading for sufficient time to enable public debate to take place on an important issue.

Housing

From 1968 to 1970 Pearson shouldered the onerous responsibilities of Minister of Housing as well as those of Treasurer during the term of the Steele Hall Government. In this respect, he continued the compassionate legislation of the Playford and the Walsh-Dunstan Governments: housing for sale to those who could afford it and rental housing for those who could not.

His term of office saw the expansion of the State Housing Trust in such areas as Elizabeth and Christies Beach. When he retired as a member of Parliament, his services were sought after and he became Chairman of the Adelaide Permanent Building Society from 1970 until his death in November 1976. He had been knighted shortly before his retirement from politics in 1970.

retirement from politics in 1970.

Personal Assessment

According to a Methodist minister who was Sir Glen Pearson's pastor in the early 1970s, the Deputy Premier was a man of integrity and honour, one who was always eager to do his best for his district and for South Australia. He would face each problem squarely and would stand up fiercely for those who relied on him for his support of a righteous cause.

It is fair to say that Sir Glen's record of service to others stemmed from his Christian upbringing, his considerable and continuing

activity in the local Church and community, and his genuine interest in and concern for those around him.

Sir Glen Pearson represented the non-conformist conscience in Parliament at a time when the flame of that conscience burned only fitfully and his speeches today have the ring of prophecy fulfilled.

(This is the last in a series of articles by Mr. Parr. Ed.)

§ § §

DECLINE IN THE NORTH

Go Forth in Faith

by Marlene Richards, Jamestown Parish, 1993

When I first looked at this history of Methodist and Presbyterian churches in the Jamestown region, I was struck by the amount of work that Mrs Richards has done. She has worked through the records, registers and minute books of over twenty churches and itemised events and decisions in various years. The result is that there are hundreds, perhaps a couple of thousand, of such entries.

Taking a few items at random, one learns, for example, that a new cyclone fence was given to the Whyte-Yarcowie Church in 1965, that there were 124 members at Hallett in 1915, that 20 pounds was collected at the laying of the foundation stone at Caltowie in 1876 and that the Rev Arnold Hunt spoke on overseas missions at Hallett in 1945! There is an abundance of such examples that does credit to the industry of the compiler.

This is not a narrative history and the book would have been enriched by a couple of analytical chapters on why the church in the area has declined in the last fifty years. There was a time when the region had five Methodist circuits and a Presbyterian parish. Now the Jamestown parish has one minister. Instead

of over twenty churches and preaching places, there are today only four.

It is all rather depressing to read of the closing of church after church. Caltowie has gone, Terowie has gone, Yongala has gone. The list is dishearteningly long and the book would have had added value if the reasons for this decline had been analysed.

Is the explanation to be found only in the depopulation of this rural area? Were there too many churches? Or did the embers of faith cease to burn?

But, let me not close on a negative note. The book is excellently produced. It contains an enormous amount of information and is a tribute to the industry of the compiler.

It has excellent photographs, even though most country Methodist churches look much the same and would win no medals for originality. It also has a number of very good maps. If you want to know where Franklyn, Woma, Yatina or Tarcowie are, the maps will tell you.

A.D. H.

REVISION OF CONSTITUTION

5

*(We print here a revised constitution of the Society.
This will be considered at the Annual General Meeting
on 15 November. See page one)*

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF UNITING CHURCH (S.A.)

1. **NAME** — The Name of the Society shall be the HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, hereinafter called the Society.
2. **OBJECTS** — The objects of the Society shall be:
 - (1) To arouse interest in and to promote the study and discussion of the history of the Uniting Church and of the three churches existing prior to union;
 - (2) To promote the collection, preservation and exhibition of historical documents and records (not required by the Synod to be lodged at Mortlock Library);
 - (3) To store and preserve adequately the artefacts and documents (not required by the Synod to be lodged at Mortlock Library);
 - (4) To publish historical articles and lectures;
 - (5) To promote the interchange of historical information by lectures, readings and discussion;
 - (6) To co-operate with other societies interested in South Australian history and/or the history of the Uniting Church and the bodies from which it was formed;
 - (7) To do all such things as are conducive to and incidental to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.
3. **MEMBERSHIP** — Membership of the Society shall be open to persons, parishes and organisations agreeing with the objects of the Society and paying the prescribed subscription. The following shall be the categories of membership:
 - (1) Life members
 - (2) Ordinary members
 - (3) And such other members as the meeting may from time to time determine.
4. **SUBSCRIPTIONS** — The subscriptions for the various categories of membership shall be determined from time to time by the Council.
5. **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** — The Annual General Meeting shall be held within two calendar months of the conclusion of the Annual Synod or the 31st October.
 - (1) Special General Meetings may be called at any time by the Secretary of the Council within thirty (30) days of the receipt by the Secretary of a requisition signed by ten (10) members in which the objects of the meeting shall be specified.

6. COUNCIL —

- (1) At the General Meeting a Council comprising the following shall be elected by those present at the meeting:

President
 Vice President
 Secretary
 Treasurer
 Editor
 and four additional members

- (a) In each case office will be for one year with the opportunity of re-election.

- (2) The administration of the Society shall be in the hands of the Council.
- (3) Unfilled and casual vacancies may be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by the Council.
- (4) The Council shall have the power to co-opt members for consultation and advice.
- (5) Four members present at a Council meeting shall form a quorum.

7. FINANCE —

- (1) All moneys received shall be deposited in the Society's bank account(s).
- (2) The Council shall have the power to invest any bequests, endowments, legacies and surplus income in securities authorized by the Trustees Acts of South Australia.
- (3) A balance sheet and a statement of receipts and expenditure, together with an auditor's report, shall be presented at the Annual General Meeting and a copy of such statements shall also be forwarded to the Secretary of the Synod for presentation to the Synod or its Standing Committee.
- (4) The income and property of the Society whencesoever derived shall be applied solely to the promotion of the objects of the Society.

8. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION —

- (1) The constitution may be amended by a three-fifths majority of the votes cast by members present at an Annual General Meeting.
- (2) Notice of a proposed amendment shall be sent to the Secretary 28 days prior to the Annual General Meeting, and all members will be advised in writing of the proposed amendment at least 14 days prior to the date of the meeting.

9. DISSOLUTION —

- (1) In the event of the dissolution of the Society all assets shall be transferred to the Secretary for the Synod to determine their disposition.

10. REPORT TO SYNOD —

- (1) A report of the activities of the Society shall be presented to the Annual Synod.
- (2) As directed in Paragraph 7(3), financial statements shall also be sent to the Annual Synod.

§ § §

VICTOR HARBOR VIDEO

The Newland Memorial Church at Victor Harbor has recently prepared a video depicting the early days of Congregationalism on the south coast, the work of the two notable ministers, Ridgeway Newland and Charles Hodge, the building

of the present church and its history in recent years. The video runs for 50 mins and gives a comprehensive survey of the church's life. It is available through Miss Christine Hunt at the church, or at the Synod Office at a cost of \$20.

§ § §

BOOK REVIEW

Workaday Preachers. Edited by Geoffrey Milburn and Margaret Batty.
Epworth Press. Price about \$27 for the paperback edition.

It is two hundred years since the Methodist Conference in Britain recognised the Local Preachers' Meeting as one of the courts of the local church. Laymen (and some women) preached earlier, often with the grudging approval of John Wesley, but 1796 is a convenient date for the official recognition of lay preachers.

This volume is the first historical study of the local preacher in Methodism. In Britain, as also in Australia, lay preachers played an outstanding role in the life of the church.

In 1932 when Methodist Union came in Britain, there were 40,000 local preachers. Today there are still 13,000, the decline being partly explicable in terms of the declining number of village chapels.

Chapters deal with such themes as the training of preachers, their response to changing social and theological trends, the great increase in women preachers and advice regarding the conduct of services.

One is struck by the record of devotion rendered by preachers. In some circuits of up to thirty chapels, a layman could be planned for ten services a quarter.

The culture of Methodism was such that it was almost an unforgivable sin for a preacher to miss his appointment. As one incident makes clear it was worse for a preacher to break his appointment than to break his leg!

This is very much a study of the local preacher in British Methodism: I hope that some day a research student will write a similar study of the inestimable contribution of local preachers to the planting of Methodism in Australia.

Local preachers are now lay preachers in the Uniting Church and, although churches are fewer and services reduced in number, they are still an essential part of the church.

A.D.H.