



A GREAT DEBT OWED TO ASSOCIATION'S CREATORS

Police Association President
Mark Carroll

One great privilege I treasured earlier this month was holding the presidency of the Police Association at the time of the organization's centenary.

The other was the opportunity, as president, to deliver the key address at a special dinner at the Adelaide Town Hall to mark the 100 years of this nation's first

police union. Part of my speech to the 300-plus guests follows.

"On the afternoon of December 7 1911, a bunch of ordinary, hard-working police – prepared to face ridicule, humiliation and even victimization – stood up. For them, the time had come to unionize, agitate and bring about desperately needed change.

"They were not radicals; they were not subversives or anarchists. They were not violent or vitriolic. They were employees who simply wanted a fair go in their workplace, fair pay, conditions and treatment.

"These pioneering police-officer unionists couldn't possibly have known it back then but they had created a



body which would forever stand as the ultimate, unfailing servant and protector of every South Australian police officer who signed up to it.

"What a debt every police officer who ever came after the formation of this association owes its humble creators.

"Creators who paved the way for their successors to go on and establish other great institutions such as Police Health, in 1935, and the Police Credit Union in 1970 – all in the interests of the entire membership.

"The association has had its standout contributors – its heroes and icons. The long-serving LB "Bob" Fenwick served as secretary for 28 years, from 1923 to 1951, and again for nine years, from 1954 to 1963.

"After he was ousted from office at the end of '51, the entirely unembittered Fenwick urged his supporters to "line up" behind his conqueror, Ned Hender. This was indicative of the broader values of Fenwick: that one should consider and serve the organization ahead of oneself.

"And he did. He actually praised Hender at a special meeting and told members that to no one would he rather

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have handed over the reins. He went on to say: 'If there is anything I can do to help the association I will do it because I have, and always have had, its interests at heart.'

"What invaluable principles Fenwick and others led the association by all those years ago. They, along with so many other dedicated association office-holders over the past 100 years, dared to care. They cared about their workmates, about justice, about fair play, about establishing conditions in which their members could better protect and serve their communities.

"I'd invite anyone to look at the association today and judge for themselves our worth as a union to our members.

"Our record in enterprise bargaining speaks for itself – wages and conditions have long been, and will always be, at the core of the very existence of the association.

"But, today, the association offers its members a range of services broader than any it has ever provided over the past 100 years.

"We have come so far from our proud, inspiring beginnings as a craft union 100 years ago, when our methods and style reflected the times. Today, observers speak of the association's professionalism, the sophisticated way in which the organization undertakes its work.

"The Police Association, Australia's

first trade union for cops, is a strong, influential organization. Its history shows it has achieved greatness when united.

"But, let us recognize the very source of the association strength, power, inspiration and influence. It is the membership itself, the exceptional men and women this union represents.

"And it motivates, sustains, drives and inflames the passions of those who steer the union ship. Through their near 100 per cent rate of membership, those men and women – who constitute this state's thin blue line – give the association ceaseless loyalty.

"And neither let us forget that the association extends its caring, comforting hand well beyond its charter. That's because membership is about care and support for workmates, even beyond the workplace.

"Through the next 100 years, the association will go on dedicating itself to its members' interests, just as diligently and as passionately as it has in the last 100 years.

"And how foolish the path on non-membership, the perilous underestimation of the value of belonging to a union which guarantees to be there, to stand up for and defend the individual and the collective.

"From this ideal, the Police Association of South Australia will never resile."

I wish all members, their families and *Police Journal* readers, a safe holiday season and a successful new year.