

Dash of history to be preserved in library

March 13, 2019

A significant chapter in Federation's early history will be preserved after the family of the second President presented artefacts and documents from the era to the union's library.

Three generations of the family of Ebenezer Dash, president from 1920 to 1922 and again in 1924, handed over material ranging from a letter from the Prince of Wales, who would later become King Edward VIII, to the lyrics of a song written about Dash.

His grandson Keith Dash said the family was now pleased the collection could be preserved in one place and displayed for Federation members through the library.

"Some of the collection is fragile and we were anxious, as a family, about what was going to happen to them because it's been passed down through the family," Mr Dash said.

"The documents, when Ebenezer's wife Minnie died in 1948, were scattered amongst Ebenezer's four children and it's taken a long time for them to come back together.

"I would really like to see them stay together as one collection because it tracks Ebenezer's life ... from the time he joined the teaching service as a 16-year-old pupil teacher until he died in 1927."



The documents include two exquisite illuminated certificates, one from Dubbo's high and primary schools thanking Mr Dash for his service, that Federation President Maurie Mulheron indicated to the family would undergo conservation work to maintain their beauty.

Mr Mulheron also read out the lyrics of song penned for Mr Dash and typed on note paper, titled "Ebby, My Boy":

*Teachers long were asking that they'd get higher pay,
They formed a Federation on one day.
Talked of Arbitration,
Elected Chairman Dash,
Who never looked behind him till he landed all the cash.*

The letter from the Prince of Wales, dated 23 June, 1920, thanked Federation members for their efforts in "shaping the men and women who served King and Empire so well" during World War I.

"No one appreciates more fully than he the great importance of the work done by the public school teachers in this state and throughout the Commonwealth," his private secretary wrote.

“He desires therefore to send you his warm congratulations and to wish increasing influence and welfare to all the teachers of the state.”

In a letter to Federation Keith Dash said it was the “unanimous view of Ebenezer's living grandchildren that all the documents relating to his life as a teacher and president of the NSW State School Teachers Federation should be kept together in one collection, accessible to all family members and bona fide historians, and not dispersed among individual family members as they have been in the past”.

“It is our view that the NSW Teachers Federation is the appropriate repository for the Ebenezer Dash Collection,” he wrote.

Keith Dash said the press clippings included in the collection gathered by his grandfather reflected the mood of the times and were important to him personally.

“They track his career ... and most of it deals with his time as president of the Federation,” Mr Dash said.

— Scott Coomber