

Concession Speech: Mathew Charlton, Opposition Leader (ALP)

February 5, 1923

“It is as well to review the circumstances which led to the recent appeal to the electors.

Prior to the dissolution the Opposition moved many censure motions against the Government, all of which were fully justified.

In consequence of the disclosures then made, the Prime Minister announced that the House would be dissolved, although it had some months to run, to enable an appeal to the people.

The result was a crushing defeat for the Government, their numbers being reduced from 38 to 27, including the loss of five Ministers.

After this unmistakable defeat the only honourable course for the Government to adopt, in accordance with Parliamentary practice, was to resign.

Instead of at once taking this course, the country has witnessed the most degrading spectacle of a defeated Government bargaining behind closed doors with another political party for support, treating the people’s verdict with contempt in order that it may retain place and power.

This having failed, the Prime Minister has now resigned, and advised the Governor-General to send for Mr Bruce to form a Government out of the 27 followers of the party which was spurned by the people.

In view of the intriguing which has taken place since the elections, it is no wonder the people are losing confidence in Parliament.”

Source: Compiled from original documents and the Sydney Morning Herald, 5/2/1923