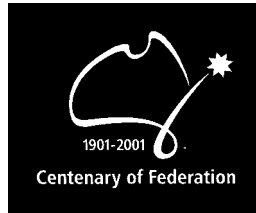


TRUE BELIEVERS



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Edited by John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre

ALLEN & UNWIN

First published in 2001

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83 Alexander St
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Web: www.allenandunwin.com

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

True believers: the story of the federal parliamentary Labor Party.

Includes index.
ISBN 1 86508 527 8 (pbk).
ISBN 1 86508 610 X (limited ed.)
ISBN 1 86508 609 6

I. Australian Labor party—History. 2. Political parties—
Australia—History. I. Macintyre, Stuart, 1947– . II. Faulkner, John

324.29407

Set in 10.5/13 pt New Baskerville by DOCUPRO, Canberra
Printed by Brown Prior Anderson Pty Ltd, Burwood, Vic.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Abbreviations	vii
Glossary	ix
Contributors	xiv
Foreword by Kim C. Beazley	xvii
Introduction	xx

PART I THE STORY

1 The origins of Caucus: 1856–1901	3
<i>Frank Bongiorno</i>	
2 The first Caucus	17
<i>Stuart Macintyre</i>	
3 Leading the world: 1901–16	30
<i>Ross McMullin</i>	
4 Back from the brink: 1917–29	47
<i>Bobbie Oliver</i>	
5 The growth of federal authority: 1929–40	60
<i>Terry Irving</i>	
6 Victory to defeat: 1941–49	76
<i>Graham Freudenberg</i>	
7 Crisis to crisis: 1950–66	90
<i>Sean Scalmer</i>	
8 Caucus under Whitlam: 1967–75	105
<i>Paul Kelly</i>	

TRUE BELIEVERS

9	The Hayden years: 1976–82	122
	<i>Alan Ramsey</i>	
10	Labor in power: 1983–96	139
	<i>Mike Steketee</i>	
11	Rejection to recovery: 1996 to May 2000	157
	<i>Geoffrey Barker</i>	

PART II PERSPECTIVES

12	Partner or rival? Caucus and Cabinet	173
	<i>Patrick Weller and Bronwyn Stevens</i>	
13	Reporting Caucus: The press and Labor crises	184
	<i>Clem Lloyd</i>	
14	Splits: Consequences and lessons	203
	<i>John Faulkner</i>	
15	Women in Caucus	219
	<i>Marian Simms</i>	
16	Critics of Caucus	236
	<i>Verity Burgmann</i>	
17	Caucus and the factions	250
	<i>Michelle Grattan</i>	
18	Rats	265
	<i>John Iremonger</i>	

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Officers of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party	287
Appendix 2	Parliamentary positions held by members of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party	292
Notes		296
Index		315

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1928–32), Australian Broadcasting Commission (1932–83) and Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1983–)
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIF	Australian Imperial Force (World War I and World War II)
ALF	Australian Labour Federation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMWU	Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union
ANOP	Australian Nationwide Opinion Polls
ANU	Australian National University
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organization
AWC	Advisory War Council (World War II)
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Limited
CMF	Commonwealth Military Force (World War I) or Citizen's Militia Forces (World War II)
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
EMILY's List	'Early Money Is Like Yeast' List
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
GDP	gross domestic product
GST	Goods and Services Tax
IAC	Industry Assistance Commission
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World

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LH & MWU	Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers' Union
LWO	Labor Women's Organisation
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MX	Missile Experimental
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PLL	Political Labor/Labour League
PLP	Parliamentary Labor Party
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
SDF	Social Democratic Federation of Western Australia
SLP	Socialist Labor Party
THC	Trades Hall Council
TLC	Trades and Labour/Labor Council
UAP	United Australia Party
ULP	United Labor/Labour Party
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby
WWF	Waterside Workers' Federation

GLOSSARY

ADVISORY WAR COUNCIL was created by the Menzies Government in 1940 as a confidential forum in which the Cabinet could take senior members of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party into its confidence to discuss war measures. Under John Curtin, Labor agreed to serve in the Council but rebuffed Menzies' efforts to turn it into an all-party national government.

ARBITRATION of industrial disputes by courts was an Australian response to the strikes and lockouts of the 1890s. The FPLP urged the creation of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, which occurred in 1904, and welcomed subsequent legislation that enabled it to make employers pay a 'fair and reasonable wage'. Some sections of the labour movement criticised the restrictions arbitration imposed on direct industrial action, but the ALP defended arbitration against its critics and enemies and still does.

AUSTRALIAN LABOUR FEDERATION (ALF) was formed by an inter-colonial congress of trade unions in 1889 'to secure direct representation of Labor in parliament'. The Queenslanders established its first district councils and others were formed in other colonies. In New South Wales, the ALF merged with the Labor Electoral League in 1895 to form the Political Labor League.

BRISBANE LINE refers to a supposed military scheme devised during World War II that would see the Australian forces fall back from northern Australia to defend the major cities from a Japanese invasion. Labor's Eddie Ward alleged in 1942 that the Menzies Government had prepared such a plan.

CAUCUS, originally meaning a group of parliamentarians who met and agreed on common action in advance of parliamentary business, was adopted by the Labor Party from its inception as a mechanism of collective decision-making that bound all its parliamentary representatives. In the Commonwealth Parliament, the Labor Caucus is the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.

COMMUNIST PARTY of Australia was formed in 1920 as a revolutionary alternative to the Labor Party. During the early years, some individual members and trade union officials (such as the Trades Hall Reds) remained members of the Labor Party and sought to influence it. After they were expelled, the Communist Party sometimes denounced the ALP and sometimes tried to infiltrate it. The election of communists to leading positions in trade unions affiliated to the Labor Party made for continuing controversy, especially after the formation of the Industrial Groups.

COUNTRY PARTY was established after World War I to represent the interests of farmers. It quickly formed a coalition with the urban-based Nationalist Party and, despite differences over economic policy, has been aligned with the non-Labor forces throughout most of its history. The Party has undergone a number of name changes to broaden its appeal. In May 1975, the title National Country Party was adopted. In October 1982 it became the National Party of Australia.

DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY (DLP) was created by former members of the Australian Labor Party after the split of 1955. Although unsuccessful in elections for the House of Representatives, it won several Senate seats. By directing its preferences away from Labor candidates for the House of Representatives, it helped keep the ALP out of national office until 1972. Thereafter the DLP declined rapidly and was disbanded in 1978, though some diehards continue to use the title.

FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (FPLP) was created by a meeting of the labour members of the first Commonwealth Parliament on 8 May 1901. It consists of all members of the Caucus and elects an executive, chair and secretary. The decisions taken at meetings of the FPLP guide the actions of Labor parliamentarians. The FPLP also elects the leaders of the Party and Labor ministers or shadow ministers, while the leader allocates their portfolios.

FREE TRADERS were one of the two non-Labor parties in the early Commonwealth. Under the leadership of George Reid, they followed similar policies to free-trade parties in the colonial parliaments, which opposed tariff restrictions on imports and more generally resisted government interference with the operation of the market. The success of the Labor Party caused the Free Traders to merge with their Protectionist rivals in the Fusion of 1909.

FUSION accomplished the amalgamation of the Protectionists and Free Traders in federal politics, in response to the growing success of the ALP.

INDUSTRIAL GROUPS were formed by trade union officials during World War II to combat the growing communist influence in the unions. They were assisted by B. A. Santamaria, the leader of the Movement (see below), and given official recognition from 1945 by some state branches of the Labor Party. Through its growing strength in the unions, the Movement exercised control over Labor policy and parliamentary preselection. In the aftermath of the Party split of 1955, the ALP withdrew recognition of the Groups.

LABOR/LABOUR The members of the early Australian labour movement used both spellings. The former, which follows American practice, was common by the turn of the century and formally adopted by the Australian Labor Party from 1912. The latter, which retains English convention, is still used to refer to the broader movement.

LABOR ELECTORAL LEAGUE was the name originally adopted by the Labor Party in New South Wales.

LIBERAL PARTY was launched in 1945 from the wreckage of the United Australia Party. It took in other non-Labor organisations to broaden the electoral base, and created an effective federal structure which had the membership and resources to compete with the Labor Party. The Liberal Party has proved far more durable than its predecessors.

THE MOVEMENT, or Catholic Social Studies Movement, was a clandestine political organisation formed in 1939. Under the leadership of B. A. Santamaria, it aimed to combat communism and extend influence in the labour movement through the creation of Industrial Groups and other means. The Movement gained control of the Victorian branch of the ALP but was defeated after the federal Leader, H. V. Evatt, denounced it.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE (FEDERAL CONFERENCE UNTIL 1975) is the sovereign body of the Australian Labor Party. In contrast to the British Labour Party, other social democratic parties and the state branches of the ALP, however, the Federal Conference began as a small body that met infrequently. For 60 years, the six state branches of the ALP sent six delegates each to a triennial (after 1951, biennial) Federal Conference. In 1967, the Conference was expanded to include the four federal parliamentary leaders (the Leader and Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives and the Senate), each state leader, and representation from the Territories. Its size expanded substantially in the 1980s and 1990s. Any policy decision or directive of National Conference binds all Labor Party members, including the FPLP. It now meets every three years and produces a Platform and rules.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE (FEDERAL EXECUTIVE UNTIL 1975) was created in 1915 to administer the ALP and interpret Conference decisions. Originally it met twice a year, and consisted of a president and a secretary (elected by Conference), with two delegates from each state. In 1967, the Executive was expanded to include the Leader and Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Its composition has changed over the years and it now consists of twenty delegates elected by National Conference, with the Leader of the FPLP

as an additional delegate. The Executive exercises increasing control over state branches of the Party and, through its plenary powers, is the most powerful ALP body other than National Conference.

NATIONALIST PARTY (1917–31) was formed by the pro-conscriptionists who followed Billy Hughes out of the Labor Party and joined with the non-Labor forces. Its name emphasised the broad appeal to patriotic sentiment, but after S. M. Bruce succeeded Hughes as Leader, the Nationalist Party was aligned more closely with business interests. It governed in coalition with the Country Party until its electoral defeat in 1929, and was dissolved when the United Australia Party was created out of the second Labor split.

NEW LEFT was a radical movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It emerged out of dissatisfaction with communism and the Old Left, called for less hierarchical and more participatory forms of political activity, and combined criticism of class inequality with condemnation of racial and sexual oppression.

NEW PROTECTION tied the tariff protection of Australian industry to maintenance of local living standards. Under legislation passed in 1906 by the Deakinite Protectionist government with Labor support, local employers could claim the benefits of protection from imports only if they provided a 'fair and reasonable' wage to their employees.

PLATFORM is the statement of Party policy binding on all members of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. The first federal Platform was determined by representatives of the colonial labour parties in 1900 and amended by the first Caucus. Subsequently, the Federal Conference determined the Platform.

PLEDGE is a written promise made by Labor members to support the Party Platform and accept the collective decisions of the Caucus. The pledge was introduced by the colonial labour parties in the 1890s and adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.

POLITICAL LABOUR LEAGUE (PLL) was formed in New South Wales in 1895 as an amalgamation of the Labor Electoral League and the Australian Labour Federation.

PROTECTIONISTS were one of the two non-Labor parties in the early Commonwealth. Under the leadership of Edmund Barton, they followed similar policies to protectionist parties in the colonial parliaments, which sought to protect local industries from import competition. After Alfred Deakin succeeded Barton as leader in 1903, other forms of government assistance were extended to industry and to the protection of living standards. The success of the Labor Party caused the Protectionists to merge with the Free Traders in the Fusion of 1909.

STATE CONFERENCE is the primary assembly of the Australian Labor Party. Each of the states and territories, which are constituted as branches of the Party, holds a conference, mostly annually, at which local branches and affiliated unions are represented. The State Conference elects officers and determines policy and state branch rules.

STATE EXECUTIVE (ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE) is characteristically elected by the State Conference of the ALP to administer the Party and conduct its affairs, including election campaigns.

TRADES HALL REDS were a group of union officials led by Jock Garden, the secretary of the New South Wales Labor Council and a member of the Communist Party until 1926. Through the affiliation of their unions to the New South Wales branch of the ALP, they endeavoured to influence Labor policy and exercised considerable influence in the endemic factional conflict in that state. The Trades Hall Reds became closely aligned with Jack Lang and supported him in his defiance of the Federal Executive.

UNITED AUSTRALIA PARTY (UAP) was formed in 1931 from the popular conservative movements that formed during the Depression, and lured the former Labor Premier and Federal Minister, Joseph Lyons, to become its leader. It absorbed the remnants of the decrepit Nationalist Party, won office at the end of 1931 and held it for a decade before succumbing to its own inertia.

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FOREWORD

(*Sydney Morning Herald*)

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Kim C. Beazley

I try to think of the labour movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody's pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective—the light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand.

Ben Chifley to the NSW Labor Party Conference, 12 June 1949

When Chifley made his memorable declaration of faith, the federal Caucus that he led and the Australian Commonwealth of which he was Prime Minister were both approaching their first half-century. Nobody knew better the Labor Party's flaws and shortcomings. Nobody was wiser in the ways of the compromise and expediency inseparable from the workings of democratic politics. The half-century of Labor he had lived through, much of it as a key participant, was certainly as turbulent and disillusioning as anything that was to follow in Labor's next half-century. Yet 'Chif's' simple statement of aspiration for the party and movement he loved was grounded absolutely in a lifetime of practical and often bitter experience; there was nothing naïve about the statement or the man who made it. That is why it has stood the test of time. That is why it retains its relevance, not least for somebody privileged to follow in Ben Chifley's steps.

Chifley stands as the mid-point of the remarkable story told in this book. Still the Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, he died in his plain

little room at the Kurrajong Hotel in Canberra at the very moment they were assembling in the Kings Hall in Old Parliament House for a ball to celebrate 50 years of Federation. It is a poignant reminder of the fact that the federal Parliament and the federal Caucus began together. In fact, Caucus claims the seniority of one day over Parliament. Twenty-two members met in a room at Parliament House, Melbourne, at 11.00 am on Wednesday, 8 May 1901—the day before the official opening of the first federal Parliament—and immediately resolved: ‘That we form ourselves into a Federal Labor Party.’

Thus begins, with unique precision about time and place, the narrative of the federal Caucus. Here I use the term ‘narrative’ in the sense defined by the contemporary American philosopher Neil Postman:

I mean by ‘narrative’ a story. But not any kind of story. I refer to *big* stories—stories that are sufficiently profound and complex to offer explanations of the origins and future of a people; stories that construct ideals, prescribe rules of conduct, specific sources of authority, and, in doing all this, provide a sense of continuity and purpose.¹

This book contains a truly big story, exactly in that sense—a narrative providing continuity and purpose, not only for the Australian Labor Party, but also for the nation itself. It is the idea of a big, continuing, unfolding story that keeps the Australian Labor Party together and, through it, helps keep our nation together.

Alone of all the Australian political parties, those still existing and those that have disappeared into history, its members have sat in both Houses in every Parliament since Federation. Alone of the Australian parties, it pre-dates Federation and has upheld its presence in every state and territory Parliament since Federation. Alone of the Australian parties, it defines itself on its own terms. All other parties have taken as their fundamental point of identity and unity, such as it has been, the fact that they oppose Labor. The exceptional stability of Australian political life owes everything to the fact that an effective two-party system—the mainstay of parliamentary democracy—has developed in Australia around a simple concept: Labor or anti-Labor.

The federal Caucus is the living and working expression of the Australian Labor Party’s commitment to parliamentary democracy. This commitment was the very basis of its creation in pre-federal Australia in 1891. When, as early as 1904, Labor was able to form a government under its first federal leader, John Christian Watson, this commitment decisively shaped the Party’s course and conduct. It was this kind of parliamentary success—opportunism or pragmatism, call it what you will—that led Lenin, in his bitter Swiss exile, to categorise the ALP as ‘altogether liberal and bourgeois’. More to the point, Labor’s commitment to parliamentary government in its own right meant a conscious and deliberate broadening of its appeal: simply, winning government needed a majority of votes. Thus, despite its origins and its enduring relationship with the union movement, the Labor Party never attempted to be a purely class or sectional party. Moreover, it always took the *Australian* part of its title as seriously as the *Labor* part. We have sought representation in both city and bush and our governments have been strongest when we have been successful in both.

Ben Chifley used to say to my father before elections: ‘Watch the wheat seats.’ Now I can say to my daughters on election night: ‘Watch the regions.’

However, Labor’s commitment to the parliamentary process is only part of a bigger story. It is a people’s party. In his ‘Light on the Hill’ credo, Chifley spoke about the Labor movement and its people. All the distinguished contributors to this book recognise the importance of the relationship between the Caucus and the Party’s other constituent parts—the National Conference, the National Executive, the Party organisation, the branches and the rank and file; and, for Labor in government, the crucial relationship between Caucus and Cabinet. Indeed, the working out of these relationships forms one of the book’s great threads—often tense, sometimes tangled but, ultimately, strong and unbroken. In this context, it is worth recalling Gough Whitlam’s foreword to the *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949*, edited by Patrick Weller. He wrote in 1974: ‘The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party is the most representative of all the decision-making councils of the Australian Labor Party.’

This is the story of the Labor Party’s century-long endeavour to be truly representative of the Australian people. To those who complain that the composition of Caucus is not what it was 30 or 50 or 80 years ago, I can only answer: ‘Nor is Australia.’ And the great social changes in Australia are very largely the changes Labor itself has wrought. Whatever we may think of the Party’s human inadequacies in the face of history, its terrible splits and self-inflicted wounds, there was never a time when the men and women who have made up the federal Caucus over the century did not reflect significantly the hopes, fears and sometimes the prejudices of the people who elected them to Parliament. And in the final analysis, it will be the success or failure of the federal Labor Caucus, as the elected representatives of the Australian people, expressing their aspirations for the coming decades, that will determine whether or not parliamentary democracy will survive as the way Australia is to be governed throughout the 21st century.

I am most grateful to Senator John Faulkner and Professor Stuart Macintyre, the originators of this project and the organisers of the work of the distinguished writers who have produced this splendid book. Together they tell us the ‘big story’ of Australian Labor. Long may the story continue to unfold, because it is a story at the very heart of the Australian life.

KIM C. BEAZLEY

Leader, Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
Canberra, May 2001

INTRODUCTION

A group of newly elected members of the first Commonwealth Parliament met on 8 May 1901, a day before the Parliament was opened at Melbourne's Exhibition Building and the members sworn in. They did so to form a new political party of a new kind—the Australian Labor Party. Behind them there lay a decade of activity in the colonial Parliaments by what we now see as the elected representatives of the Labor Party, and behind them in turn lay the trade unions and other labour organisations, the various socialist groups, the radical activists and agitators who had decided to contest the exclusion of the Australian working class from government. When the new Commonwealth was created at the turn of the century, these forces decided that they should stand candidates in the elections for its legislature. Those who were successful in the first federal elections thus met as the Labor Caucus.¹

This Caucus continues to this day, the only such body to have remained in continuous existence over the life of the Commonwealth. In effect, it preceded the formation of the Australian Labor Party. The first meeting consisted of 'members of the Federal Parliament favourable to the formation of a Commonwealth Labour Party', and their first action was to determine 'That we form ourselves into a Federal Labour Party'.² Very quickly this became known as the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, which in turn was the parliamentary wing of the Australian Labor Party. (Both spellings, Labour and Labor, were used interchangeably for some time.) The Federal Conference, and later the Federal Executive, were created to direct its work, but they met infrequently and the

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'Doc' Evatt (left) pictured with Ben Chifley. As Chifley's Minister for External Affairs, Evatt played an important role in post-war international relations and was President of the third session of the United Nations General Assembly 1948–49. (Evatt Collection, Flinders University Library of South Australia)

far more continuous activity of the Caucus gave it particular significance in the life of the Party.

It was a parliamentary party of a new kind. The members were pledged to follow the policies of the extra-parliamentary Labor Party; the collective decisions of Caucus were binding on all its members and Caucus exercised a far more systematic control over policy and tactics than did the parliamentary members of the older political groupings. As Frank Bongiorno explains, this tight Party discipline affronted Labor's critics, and as other contributors to the volume make clear, it also made for tensions between leaders and backbenchers. For that matter, the insistence that Caucus should follow the direction of the Party's decision-making bodies made it difficult to contain major differences on important issues. Labor's commitment to unity allowed for no other resolution of absolute disagreement than a parting of ways; hence the three major splits of 1916, 1931 and 1954–55.

Even so, the strength of this new party was undeniable. In 1904 it became the first workers' party anywhere in the world to form a national government. In 1910, it went one better and became the first to achieve a parliamentary majority. Before then, in 1909, the non-Labor forces had sunk their differences and come together in a single party, which borrowed some of Labor's organisational features in an effort to match its electoral success. Since then Labor has experienced swings of fortune. It has been out of office for a decade or more on three occasions, and has held government for 32 years and 6 months, a little less than a third of the lifetime of the Commonwealth. Labor has repeatedly been returned to office at moments of national crisis: the outbreak of World War I; the onset of the Depression in 1929; the looming war in the Pacific in 1941; the mounting failure of established economic arrangements in 1983. The durability of Labor is a striking feature of Australian political history. The non-Labor parties have formed and reformed as the result of their

WHEN CAUCUS MEETS . . .

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Kim Beazley addresses a Caucus meeting in 2000 with his fifteen predecessors looking on from the wall behind. (Auspic)

The Caucus meets every Tuesday morning when Parliament is in session in Canberra. The venue is the Opposition party room on the House of Representatives side of Parliament House occupied by the Caucus since Labor's defeat in 1996. Decorated with a few photographs of Caucuses and Ministries of the past and a cabinet of keepsakes, the party room provides few indications of the dramas that have been played out within its walls. On the wall to the right of the doorway, photographs of the fifteen federal Labor leaders, from Watson to Keating, are displayed. The photographic record does not discriminate: a rat (Hughes) and a temporary Leader (Forde) are there with Curtin, Chifley and Whitlam. The photographs only appear on the wall once a

Leader has left office. During Caucus meetings a Leader might well be distracted by the empty wall space awaiting his image. The photographs are a reminder that while the nation can elect a Labor government, it is the Caucus that chooses the Prime Minister.

Nearly 100 plain green chairs form rows facing a front table. There are also a dozen or so desk chairs with armrests, and some comfortable lounge chairs, ranged around the room. Caucus members are creatures of habit and tend to sit in the same place each meeting. Caucus meetings are scheduled to start at 9.30 am, and members and senators trickle into the room from about that time. Conversation and banter among the early arrivals ends when the Caucus officers declare a quorum

is present (currently 48 members). The Caucus is called to order with the Chairman's gavel and the meeting begins. Caucus business is conducted according to the 23 pages of 'Rules of the Australian Parliamentary Labor Party', rarely referred to but the final word on any controversy. The Rules cover matters from the very composition of Caucus itself, balloting, standing orders, the role and function of officers to the dry details of Caucus procedures such as time limits for speeches.

It is May 2000. At the front table facing the doors sit the Chairman, George Campbell, the Secretary, Sue West, and the Deputy Chairman, Harry Quick. They are responsible for working through the agenda. The factions generally sit together, the Left appropriately facing the Chairman on his left, the Right to his right and the Centre and Independents square on. But there are always exceptions. Some sit at a large table at one end of the room where the daily papers are available. Facing the room, on lounges to the left of the front table, sit four senior Caucus members—Kim Beazley, Simon Crean, John Faulkner and Bob McMullan—while other members of Caucus face the room on the Caucus officers' right.

The meetings usually last two hours or so. They begin with apologies and adoption of the previous meeting's Minutes. Then there is consideration of legislation, led by the responsible Shadow Ministers—some of the most vigorous debates have occurred

already in Caucus committees, which consider the detail of legislation before Caucus meets. Other business is interrupted at 10.30 am for Kim Beazley to present the regular Leader's report—the focus of the modern Caucus meeting. The Leader and Shadow Ministers take questions from the floor. Administrative business follows; this is when the Returning Officer, John Murphy, will report on any vacancies to be filled, nominations received or ballots to be conducted. Housekeeping matters will be settled. The Managers of Opposition Business, Bob McMullan and Kim Carr, and the Whips, Leo McLeay and Kerry O'Brien, report on parliamentary business in both chambers—pairing arrangements, the legislation program, key debates and general administrative matters.

Unlike earlier years, when a strong voice was essential, speakers now have the advantage of a microphone and lectern at the front of the Caucus room. Positioned just behind the lectern is an old-fashioned blackboard on a triangular easel, complete with chalk. This is used for listing candidates in Caucus elections, and then recording the number of votes they receive if a ballot is required. The atmosphere is generally informal. But the chalkboard is a constant reminder that Caucus business—from the choice of a leader to the most minor piece of policy—is always underpinned by hard numbers.

John Faulkner

inability to meet popular expectations: the creation of a Country Party out of the discontent of farmers at the end of World War I; the self-destruction of the Nationalist Party in 1929; the chronic inertia of the United Australia Party in 1941. The conservatives have repeatedly had to reinvent themselves, while Labor has proved remarkably resilient.

It is a paradox that the conservatives should be so fragile while the radicals maintained such continuity. Nearly half a century ago, the political scientist Henry Mayer challenged the belief that Labor was the party of initiative and non-Labor the party of resistance. He suggested that the non-Labor forces had in fact been responsible for some of the more innovative contributions to

Australian national politics. From Deakin's invention of the wage earners' welfare state to Menzies' discovery of 'the forgotten people' and Howard's more recent revival of 'the battlers', there is evidence aplenty of non-Labor's capacity to redraw the political map.

Labor has no monopoly on innovation, but can claim to have been responsible for those initiatives that have sought to make the most substantial improvement to the lives of working people. The Fisher Government pushed out the boundaries of state support for Australian wage standards, working conditions and social welfare. The Curtin and Chifley Governments of the 1940s made full employment a primary object of national life, expanded welfare provision and established major state enterprises for the national benefit. The Whitlam Government sought to ensure that all Australians should have adequate housing, health and education. The Hawke and Keating Governments managed Australia's transition to a modern global economy while protecting living standards. Labor has not always achieved its goal of protecting working Australians from hardship, and it has often been accused of betraying its socialist objective, but its historic role has been a progressive one.

At first a strong supporter of the White Australia Policy, Labor laid the foundations for the immigration program that enriched the population after World War II, and under Whitlam championed cultural diversity as a strength. Complicit in the exclusion of Aboriginal Australians from the Commonwealth in the early part of the twentieth century, Labor led the restoration of land rights and recognition of the Indigenous peoples. Strongly masculine in its composition and outlook, it gave effect to affirmative action for women. In international policy it was always the most ardent in support of independent nationhood and, with Evatt as Minister for External Affairs, the Labor Party played a vital role in the wider process of decolonisation and international cooperation. The Hawke and Keating Governments were particularly active in promoting a confident outward-looking nation.

What role did Caucus play in this record of endeavour? The chapters in Part I tell a story of continuity and change in the contribution of Caucus to national political life. From the beginning it was closely involved in the formulation of policy and the day-to-day parliamentary strategy of the Labor Party. As Labor evolved from an initial stance of conditional support for the more progressive of the two non-Labor parties, the Protectionists, to greater independence and then government in its own right, Caucus was the principal forum. Here the dynamics of a genuinely democratic parliamentary party were worked out.

The Caucus elected the Party Leader and the front bench. In some comparable democracies, it is the organisational wing of the party that determines the leadership. The Caucus alone has provided this nation with its Prime Minister or alternative Prime Minister since 1909.³ Momentous leadership ballots have included the choice of John Curtin over Frank Forde in 1935, vital for the subsequent direction of the nation at war; the re-election of Gough Whitlam over Jim Cairns in 1968, confirming the new direction of Labor policy;

and the election of Paul Keating over Bob Hawke in 1991, the only occasion on which the Labor Party has rejected its own Prime Minister. Labor has been conspicuously reluctant to abandon a leader. Leaving aside Billy Hughes' walk-out from the party room in 1916 with the minority of Caucus members who agreed with him on conscription, it has repeatedly stuck by ailing leaders until they have been ready to quit. No such mercy was shown to Hawke. Perhaps Caucus has become less tolerant than its sentimental predecessors.

Having chosen the Leader, the Caucus determines the composition of the Ministry when in office and, from 1967, the Shadow Ministry when in Opposition. The Leader allocates the portfolios, a power that should never be underestimated in establishing authority and influence. The Leader, however, has always been necessarily dependent on Caucus for the determination of policy and confirmation of particular decisions. The Caucus flexed its muscles in the early years but came to appreciate that the leadership must be allowed room to manoeuvre. A working relationship was established that came under serious strain only when there were major divisions over policy: the wartime conscription crisis, the inability to deal with mass unemployment during the Depression, and the divisions over communism and anti-communism in the early 1950s were the stormiest periods and all resulted in splits. For their part, leaders learnt to respect the Caucus as a forum and a repository of good counsel that they disregarded at their peril.

In the course of the century, practices were established that reduced the capacity of the Caucus to determine policy. The Federal Conference and Executive came to exercise their superior authority more pervasively, and provide forums to which leaders were able to appeal when Caucus members questioned their actions. The application of the principle of Cabinet solidarity to the party room made it increasingly difficult for dissidents to overturn decisions, and the establishment of Caucus policy committees has reduced the likelihood of disagreement. The formalisation of factions has meant that the numbers can be predicted in advance of a Caucus vote. With factions now factored into Caucus deliberations, meetings serve more often to ratify policies that are determined outside the party room. To this extent, formal Caucus meetings no longer possess the relevance they once possessed.

Yet the members of the Caucus have never been more influential as political actors. Australian politics is now conducted as a media spectacle. While government policies are formulated by advisers, costed by bureaucrats and tested by pollsters, they are enunciated by Ministers and criticised by Shadow Ministers. While elections involve hundreds of candidates backed by thousands of party workers, they are played out as a gladiatorial contest between the party leaders with a limited supporting cast of colleagues, all of them competing for a few seconds on television or working the radio airwaves. Ambitious backbenchers break ranks to win a headline. The extra-parliamentary party officials who once were apparent as powerbrokers are now seldom heard; they work most effectively when they are invisible. The local figures who once spoke for the party within their local communities are eclipsed. The faces, the voices, mannerisms and personalities of Caucus members are now the cast of political theatre.

THE MISSING CAUCUS MINUTES

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Boxes and filing cabinets being removed from Gough Whitlam's office on 11 November 1975. The solution to the puzzle of the missing Caucus Minute books may well lie in this hasty removal. (Canberra Times)

The Caucus Minutes have been recorded, usually by the Secretary, since the first meeting of the FPLP in May 1901. One hundred years later they provide a valuable and irreplaceable chronicle of deliberations and decisions, conflict and consensus. The first 49 years of Caucus meetings were published, *in toto*, in three volumes prepared by Patrick Weller with the assistance of Bev Lloyd in 1975. Permission to reproduce the Minutes was granted on the condition that work be undertaken in the FPLP Leader's office where the original volumes were kept. Yet even this level of protection did not prevent the disappear-

ance of several volumes of Minutes covering the periods 1901–06 and 1952–69 some time between the completion of Weller's work in 1974 and early 1976.

It is unclear when the loss was discovered. Weller used the 1901–06 volume and recalls seeing the post-1949 volumes during the course of his work. Kim Beazley Jnr also used the Minutes in Gough Whitlam's office, as he recorded all Caucus foreign policy decisions while researching a postgraduate thesis. In March 1979 Harry Jenkins informed Caucus 'when he took over as Caucus Secretary [February 1976] the only minutes available

dated from November 1971. There were no minute books to cover period 1949–1971’.

Jenkins’ statement was made during debate on a motion by Clyde Cameron that Bill Hayden ‘write’ to Whitlam ‘seeking information from him as to the identity of all persons who were given access to the Caucus minute books now reported missing while they were in his custody’. Following suggestions that the Minutes could be in the National Library, the National Archives or with a research student, Caucus adopted a less formal motion that Whitlam be asked for assistance.

A report in a Melbourne newspaper the next day, ‘Labor search for key notes’, caused some disquiet in the National Library. The Director-General advised Hayden the Library was in fact holding the Minute books for the periods July 1906 to September 1952 and February 1969 to November 1971, which had been received from the ALP National Secretariat in 1978.

Discussion within Caucus resumed a week later and although a number of possi-

bilities regarding the fate of the Minutes were canvassed, no positive conclusion was reached. Whitlam’s questioning of former staff proved fruitless, as did inquiries with the National Secretariat. The final word was left to Jenkins, who stated ‘proper storage should be found for the minutes such as the safe that he as Secretary was able to accommodate in his office’.

Over twenty years later, despite extensive searches and inquiries including those carried out for this book, the Minute books for the periods 1901–06 and 1952–69 are still to be located. There are typed copies of the Minutes for the period May 1901 to early 1960 located in Arthur Calwell’s papers in the National Library. It is possible the missing volumes were mislaid in the confusion that followed the events of 11 November 1975, when large amounts of material were transferred to the National Secretariat. They might rest in obscurity, waiting to be found.

Christine Cannon

By August 2000, 559 men and 48 women had served in Caucus.⁴ They have been drawn from diverse backgrounds. Most of the early Caucus members were manual workers and trade unionists; most are now tertiary-educated professionals. Even in the Parliament of 1955, two-fifths of the FPLP came from blue-collar occupations and the largest occupational category was railway and tramway workers. By 1983, there were just 8 members in a Caucus of 105 from blue-collar trades and the largest occupational category was lawyers.⁵ New members of the FPLP once brought extensive experience in some earlier career, often as a trade union official; more recently they are likely to have worked within the Party ranks, often as a staff member to some current parliamentarian, serving a long apprenticeship to their own election. A number have come from state politics, and some return to it, for a career in federal politics now begins and ends at a younger age than in the earlier years.

Chris Watson, the first Labor Prime Minister, and E. G. Theodore, the Treasurer in the Scullin Government, were atypical for the time in their turn to business careers after they left Caucus. The parliamentary superannuation scheme is now far more generous, and yet many former parliamentarians head for the big end of town, and a growing number become university professors as well. Among the less common destinations of former members of Caucus are the Governor-General’s residence, the High Court, coaching the Australian women’s hockey team, the priesthood and prison.

When denominational differences mattered more, importance used to be attached to the religious affiliations of Caucus members. The early Caucuses were overwhelmingly Protestant. Partly as a result of the split over conscription in 1916, the Catholic composition of the Caucus became stronger between the wars and this division had increased significance in the 1950s because of the sectarian overtones of argument over the Movement's growing influence in the Labor Party. Strong Jewish representation became apparent in the 1960s. As religious adherence has waned, these patterns have become less important.

In the place of such tribal loyalties, another tendency has become stronger—family succession. Rowley James was the member for Hunter in New South Wales from 1928 to 1958; in 1960 the seat was won by his son, who held it until 1980. Similarly, David Watkins was followed in the neighbouring seat of Newcastle by his son, and the two held it continuously for 58 years. (Newcastle is the only federal seat to have been held by Labor for the life of the Commonwealth.) A variation occurred in Queensland. Francis Baker held the seat of Oxley from 1931 to 1934 and then Griffith until his early death in 1939. At the age of 67 his father then won Maranoa. Seven members of the current Caucus—including the Leader, Kim Beazley, and the Deputy Leader, Simon Crean—have followed their fathers into federal politics.

Membership of Caucus comes after the aspirant has persuaded Party colleagues that he or she ought to represent the Labor Party, and the voters that he or she ought to be elected to Parliament. This history of Caucus says little about the process of preselection, a subject on which there has been very little research. Sometimes this has involved a plebiscite of local Party members, sometimes a central panel; sometimes a combination of both. On occasions, state branches or the National Executive have intervened to overturn a preselection or determine a preselection outcome. Aggrieved preselection candidates have the right of appeal to the National Executive. The relationship between Caucus members and the Party workers who help choose them and labour for their election is a pervasive influence on Caucus itself; the member who neglects or defies the Party rank and file is risking the loss of preselection. Members of Caucus have to maintain a presence in their electorate and ensure that its work is explained to the local branch members; they provide a human dimension to the flow of information from the FPLP.

For almost half a century, Caucus members attended to their duties with only the most meagre resources to support them. The Chifley government was the first to provide MPs with an assistant; the Whitlam government provided a second staff member, and the Hawke government a third in 1984. The first Parliaments crowded into the grand but incomplete Victorian Parliament House. Many of the early Caucus members had never even visited Melbourne, and the long journey by sea or rail to attend the sessions there made it difficult to bring family. Most boarded, but there was companionship in a large city with a rich labour culture. The shift to Canberra provided more spacious facilities but did nothing to ease the strains of separation. Many Labor members stayed in the nearby Hotel Kurrajong but, when Parliament was not sitting, time hung on their hands in a town of paddocks. On leaving Parliament House for the last

time in 1934, Frank Anstey described it as ‘the house of dead hopes, the habitation of dead souls’.⁶

While air travel has shortened distance, there remains the problem of balancing time in Canberra, and the increasing demands of meetings outside Parliamentary sittings, with home, family and the needs of the electorate. The transfer to the new Parliament House in 1988 has perhaps increased the isolation of parliamentarians, who are immured in that vast subterranean citadel, almost a town in itself. Restaurants, shops, gymnasium, the Press Gallery, phones, faxes and the Internet—all the necessities of a politician’s life are provided for. Self-contained offices, television and e-mail have reduced personal interaction among Caucus members. Journeys are made in the comfort of a Commonwealth car or at the front end of an aircraft. Yet the pressure remains intense, and the removal from the common inconveniences that shape the lives of those for whom the Labor Party speaks and acts is often debilitating. That the Caucus has maintained its purpose attests to its respect for its past.

The persistence of Caucus is a striking feature of Australian politics. This organisation came into being to provide effective political representation for workers, and has evolved its functions and composition along with the Labor Party of which it is an integral part. It is a very distinctive part, for it attests to the continuing strength of parliamentarism as a method and ideology. In striking contrast to the Left in many other countries with liberal democratic institutions where workers have long enjoyed the right to organise, the Australian labour movement has maintained a continuous attachment to parliamentary action. Unions have continued to bargain with employers, but always within the framework of state regulation through arbitration courts and industrial commissions. When Australian workers have sought to remedy a grievance or improve their lot, they have turned instinctively to government. Neither industrial militants nor other left critics have ever displaced the primacy of the parliamentary tactic.

More than this, Australian unions have sustained their own party, the Labor Party, as the vehicle for these endeavours, while accepting that the electoral exigencies of our majoritarian system of representative government required that it broaden its appeal beyond the ranks of wage-earners. Hence the shifting composition of Caucus as well as its evolving policies. Those changes, furthermore, have been led from the FPLP. Caucus is at once the custodian of Labor’s political traditions and the expression of its continuing vitality.

This book began with an appreciation that the centenary of Federation was an appropriate occasion on which to record the contribution of the Caucus to national history. The editors, John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, intended to avoid the production of a collective hagiography. Some shibboleths might have escaped scrutiny but when there was a choice between the bland and the robust, the preference was for the latter. The editors received financial assistance from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, which allowed the project to proceed and provided for a more substantial publication than

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Bob Hawke and Paul Keating managed Australia's transition to a modern global economy.
(*Canberra Times*)

would otherwise have been possible. Financial support was also provided by the National Secretariat of the ALP.

A history of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party necessarily draws on the substantial published literature on labour history, to which many of our authors have contributed. It is appropriate here to draw attention to some essential works. Pat Weller, with the assistance of Beverley Lloyd, edited and introduced three volumes of *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949* (1975) and also the *Federal Executive Minutes 1915–1951* (1978). Ross McMullin's centenary history of the ALP, *The Light on the Hill* (1991), has been an indispensable guide, along with Gavin Souter's Bicentennial history of the Commonwealth Parliament, *Acts of Parliament* (1988), and Geoffrey Sawer's earlier *Australian Federal Politics and Law* in two volumes covering the years 1901 to 1949 (1956, 1963). These have been supplemented by three essential reference works: Colin A. Hughes, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics* in three volumes (1968, 1977, 1986); Joan Rydon, *A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament 1901–1972* (1975); and successive editions of the *Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*. Caucus allowed contributors full access to unpublished Caucus minutes.

The book is organised as a series of narrative chapters followed by thematic studies of aspects of Caucus' operation. A team of contributors was assembled from scholars of history and politics, and prominent national journalists. We thank them all for their contributions. Some overlap of coverage is inevitable, but each of the contributors has sought to present a lively and coherent account. The editors considered it would be a distraction to the eye to include full references for the boxed sections. While some citations appear within the text, other sources and references are provided at the end of the notes.

This project could not have been undertaken without the support of Caucus and the contributions of its past and present members. We particularly acknowledge four former Labor leaders—Gough Whitlam, Bill Hayden, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating—all of whom have written on aspects of their experiences in Caucus.

Christine Cannon, our research assistant, earned our gratitude for her diligence in compiling appendixes, helping contributors when required, and relieving us of many heavy responsibilities. Vikki Gibson's role in managing the information flow, and countless clerical and organisational tasks, was crucial and greatly appreciated. John Iremonger at Allen & Unwin has been personally committed to this project since its inception and has spent many hours working closely with us.

We thank those others who have made this publication possible: Tess Shannon for her research work for John Faulkner; Diana Bell for her assistance to Stuart Macintyre; Trevor Matthews for indexing the book; Amanda Buckley; Rodney Cavalier; Ashley Hogan; Laura Tingle; all those who have provided photographs and illustrations from personal or institutional collections; John Faulkner's staff; Senator Robert Ray and his staff; staff of the ALP National Secretariat; our publishers at Allen & Unwin, particularly our production editor, Rebecca Kaiser; the National Library; the National Archives; and the Parliamentary Library.

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PART I

THE STORY

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THE ORIGINS OF CAUCUS: 1856–1901

Frank Bongiorno

To deliver an opinion is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear; and which he ought always most seriously to consider. But *authoritative* instructions, *mandates* issued, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgement and conscience, these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution.

Edmund Burke, 'Speech to the Electors of Bristol', 1774¹

The foundation of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) in May 1901 was the product of several decades of experimentation by Australian trade unions with various forms of political activity. Its early practices and first platform were shaped by conclusions that Party activists had derived from their often frustrating experience of colonial politics, and their understandings of the causes of the labour movement's past successes and failures. By 1901 the Party had already introduced into Australian politics a new understanding of democracy. In theory at least, working-class electors were not only to have an opportunity to select candidates prior to elections and vote for Labor candidates at election time, but also to have a hand in framing Party policy between elections. The labour movement developed machinery—party conference, executive, Caucus and pledge—to ensure that Labor parliamentarians remained securely under the control of an extra-parliamentary

organisation representative of the labour movement.² Parliamentarians were to be delegates rather than representatives; their role was to act in accordance with the instructions given them by their masters, the Party rank and file and the union movement.

More than a century later, it is difficult to appreciate the novelty of Labor's theory of democracy, but it was founded on an understanding of the relationship between party, class and citizenship that distinguished the early Labor Party from its rivals. It amounted to a rejection of the ideas enunciated by Edmund Burke in his famous address to the electors of Bristol. For Burke, a representative ought never to sacrifice 'his unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience', which were 'a trust from Providence'.³ For the New South Wales Labor politician W. J. Ferguson,

The man who considered himself in advance of the people, had his proper place outside the House as a propagandist agent. But in Parliament he should represent the opinions of the majority which elected him . . . If a man was out of line with the majority, let him educate that majority to his own opinions, but let him not pretend to represent those with whom he was out of accord.⁴

Initially, the Labor theory of democracy encountered considerable opposition, not merely from outside the movement, but also from elements within it. The establishment of the FPLP represented the triumph of this new theory of democracy within the Australian labour movement, although in the years ahead many critics of the Party rightly stressed the large gulf that often existed between theory and practice.

The Labor Party did not invent the concept of a Caucus, nor was it the first political group in Australia to adopt the term. Meetings among parliamentarians in New South Wales were called 'Caucus' meetings as early as 1877, and the term was commonly applied to non-Labor groups in the last two decades of the century.⁵ The word itself is of obscure origin, although according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* it emerged in New England in the eighteenth century and might be of Native American derivation. In its North American usage, it usually meant a meeting among members of a legislative body belonging to a particular party or faction; in Britain, where it was frequently employed in a derogatory manner, it implied an organisation or system, and was associated with secretiveness, or 'wire-pulling'. The term has often acquired this pejorative meaning in Australia, especially when used by liberal or conservative critics. Labor, on the other hand, has sought to uphold its less pejorative meaning, and has celebrated Caucus as a key institution in its democratic party structure.

The colonial factions and parties experimented with Caucus meetings long before the Labor Party was a twinkle in anybody's eye, and by the 1860s in New South Wales 'groups supporting ministries as well as groups in opposition commonly held meetings'. Yet they tended to be held primarily during crises, their organisation was 'rudimentary', and leaders lacked any real disciplinary powers over members. Historians have likened such meetings to 'the dinners and picnics at which leaders entertained supporters', which 'were occasions of mild persuasion'.⁶ In Victoria, although Party organisation was more advanced earlier, Graham Berry's effort to impose greater discipline on his supporters in

the 1870s was deeply resented, and ultimately doomed to failure.⁷ These meetings of colonial parliamentarians were a far cry from the FLP that had emerged by the time of the Great War but, as we shall see, they are not so different from the colonial labour parties of the 1890s, especially outside New South Wales.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the introduction of responsible government and manhood suffrage to the colonies of eastern Australia provided workers with opportunities to influence the political process. Not all workers shared in the long boom (1860–90), but many were able to exploit the freedom of association offered in a democratic colonial environment to form trade unions.

These unions, which initially flourished among skilled tradesmen in the cities but eventually spread to less skilled workers in both the town and country, did not look to the state to transform class relations. They did, however, recognise that their ability to influence wages and conditions was determined by the policies that colonial governments pursued. Unions sought to influence government policy in order to secure a favourable environment for union activity. They recognised in state encouragement of immigration, for example, a threat to job opportunities, wages and conditions, while they urged governments to undertake public works in order to absorb the unemployed when work was scarce. Colonial governments, moreover, were ‘entrepreneurs in Australian capital formation’ and therefore major employers of labour.⁸ The economic activities of the state affected labour conditions throughout the economy, so unions had a strong incentive to become involved in parliamentary politics in order to influence wages and conditions in the public sector. Many unions also favoured the legislative enactment of an eight-hour day as a means of spreading employment opportunities among a greater number of workers, which would have the added effect of enhancing the bargaining position of unionists. The role of the government, meanwhile, was ‘to hold the ring within which labour and capital could reach agreement’.⁹

The means by which the unions sought to advance their political objectives were diverse: they organised protest meetings; sent delegations to ministers; lobbied parliamentarians; and occasionally even offered formal or informal support to parliamentary candidates from their own ranks. Charles Jardine Don, a Melbourne stonemason and former Chartist, was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1859 with the support of the Political Labour League, an organisation committed to the direct representation of labour in Parliament by ‘artisan’ candidates and others who supported an eight-hour day. Geoffrey Serle has seen the formation of this body as the ‘first attempt to found a Labor party’ but as parliamentarians were not paid at this time, after the election Don was compelled to seek monetary support outside the labour movement. There were soon accusations that he was in league with the squatters, and Don also became notorious for sleeping through the evening sessions of Parliament. The conviction that he had been a failure as a working man’s candidate might have been a disincentive for any similar experiments for many years.¹⁰

Later developments in New South Wales probably had a similar effect. In

1874, the Sydney Trades and Labour Council (TLC) successfully ran its own candidate for West Sydney, Angus Cameron, even paying him an allowance in an effort to avoid the kinds of problems that had confronted the Victorians. But union dissatisfaction with his performance quickly gathered momentum, and it was clear that the experiment had failed when Cameron declared himself independent of the TLC and responsible only to his local constituents.¹¹ In the 1886 Victorian election, the parliamentary committee of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council (THC) lobbied candidates, and three prominent union leaders—F. H. Bromley, W. A. Trenwith and W. E. Murphy—stood unsuccessfully for Parliament.¹² In 1889, the THC gave official support to the successful campaign of Trenwith for Parliament.¹³ By this time, Victorian parliamentarians had been receiving a salary for almost two decades, while New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia had all followed by 1891. Payment of members was a precondition for the emergence of a labour party, since worker-politicians could not financially support themselves.¹⁴ In 1888, the Brisbane TLC took advantage of these more favourable conditions for working-class representation to endorse four candidates for the Assembly elections. All were defeated, but Thomas Glassey, a recent emigrant from England who had been involved in organising a miners' union in Bundamba, near Ipswich, was elected as the member for that district.¹⁵

There could be no Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP), however, while there was only one 'Labor' Member of Parliament. It was with the emergence of Labor as a significant and, to all appearances, permanent presence in several colonial parliaments in the 1890s that the key models for the FPLP began to evolve. In a pioneering study, L. F. Crisp notes that 'the provision for majority rule in Caucus on all issues touching official Party policy was, within a month of the FPLP's inception, taken over from the practice of the State Parliamentary Labour Parties'.¹⁶ Some of the colonial labour parties had indeed evolved a theory of Caucus solidarity to govern the behaviour of their own parliamentarians, but they had not achieved this objective without considerable heartache and turmoil. We can be certain that the troubled history of the colonial labour parties of the 1890s was prominent in the minds of the men who formed the FPLP in May 1901.

Most troubled of all was New South Wales. The Labor Party there burst on to the colonial political scene in 1891 like a comet, announcing that its mission was not 'to support governments or oppositions' but 'to make and unmake social conditions'.¹⁷ Thirty-five candidates were elected to an Assembly of 141 members, and they appeared likely to hold the balance of power between protectionist and free trade parties. But within a few months, the party split into protectionist and free trade sections. At its first meeting, Caucus resolved 'that in order to secure the solidarity of the Labor Party, only those will be allowed to assist at its private deliberations who are pledged to vote in the House as a majority of the party, sitting in Caucus, has decided'.¹⁸ Eight Labor members refused to sign this pledge on the grounds that they had promised electors to support protection. When the Party then resolved that Labor parliamentarians would not support any change in tariff policy until a referendum were held on the issue, only one member of the Party refused to agree and left

AN END TO THE OLD ORDER?

Some accounts of the New South Wales general election of 1891, which produced the first Labor Caucus in Australia:

. . . at the June elections, although they did not put an end to the Old Order, they certainly gave its upholders the fright of their lives. The foundations of their being seemed to have crumbled under their feet; monstrous apparitions now stalked brazenly through their sacred corridors, from which the vulgar multitude had been hitherto rigidly excluded. A well brought up hen who by some unhappy fate had hatched out a brood of pterodactyls could not have been more overwhelmed than were the members of the old parties at the sight of these rude and uncouth figures who took their places on the cross benches.

W. M. Hughes, *Crusts and Crusades: Tales of Bygone Days*, 1947

This is a result which it would be as vain to belittle as to magnify. What it shows us is that the labour classes have skilfully used their advantages of organisation, and have secured an influential share of Parliamentary representation. This gives them a great opportunity, and much for them and for the colony at large may depend upon the use they make of it. If their representatives show themselves ready and able to take part in the necessary progressive work of the country they may render useful service, and would in so doing put themselves in the best position to claim general support in carrying any just legislation desired on behalf of their constituents. Should they adopt the policy some of their number have sketched, of segregating themselves as a class apart, having no concern or interest in the work or wants of the country, and seek merely to obtain class advantages to those who send them there, they will misuse a great chance and fail to meet an important responsibility. The intelligence and



'THE NSW POLITICAL SEE-SAW'. Labor had its first political success in the NSW election of 1891. The election of 35 Labor members initially gave the party the balance between Parkes' Freetraders and Dibbs' Protectionists. (Hop, Bulletin, 27 June 1891; National Library of Australia)

public experience of some of their leaders forbid the fear of such a failure, and rather point to the probability that the power now gained will be prudently and wisely used . . .

Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June 1891

WEDNESDAY, the seventeenth day of June, 1891, will long be remembered in the annals of Australian history as the memorable day upon which the workers of New South Wales cast off their shackles and vindicated their claim to be styled politically free.

Australian Workman, 20 June 1891

Caucus, for there was initially a strong determination to sink differences over the fiscal issue.

Many of these Labor parliamentarians had considerable experience of unionism, and sought to introduce ideas about the importance of solidarity from the industrial world. Most of the Party initially supported Henry Parkes' free trade government in the hope of gaining desired reforms, but tensions were soon apparent and, when the fate of the protectionist Dibbs Ministry was later at stake, the Party split down the middle. Only J. S. T. McGowen, a boilermaker, put his fiscal faith aside to vote for solidarity. In 1892, the divisions increased. During the Broken Hill strike, when the government intervened against the unions, eleven Labor men voted against a censure motion. Worse still, four of these parliamentarians were free-traders who could not even therefore give their fiscal creed as a reason for breaking ranks.¹⁹

A conference was held in November 1893 with the aim of increasing Party solidarity.²⁰ It considered the following pledge:

A Parliamentary Labor Party to be of any weight must give a solid vote in the House upon *every question* as it arises; and
That accordingly every candidate who runs in the labor interest should be required to pledge himself not only to the Fighting Platform and the Labor Platform, but also to vote on every occasion specified in Clause *a* as the majority of the Parliamentary Labor Party may in Caucus decide.

W. A. Holman, the socialist activist who moved the motion on behalf of the executive, explained that '[i]f they were to have a powerful and effective party in the Assembly capable of gaining reforms for the workers outside, that party must act as one. If they did that they would control Parliament, and be able to make terms with the haughtiest Government that ever held office'. Ominous for the Party, however, was the evidence of opposition to this pledge from Labor parliamentarians and other activists. One critic of the pledge remarked that a parliamentarian might, 'in obedience to the majority, have to stultify his life-long opinions, a thing which no honest man would do'. W. F. Schey, a parliamentarian, 'considered it an immoral thing to ask a man to pledge himself in advance to vote in a certain way on questions which had not arisen', while Joseph Cook MLA believed that the proposed pledge would not work: '[t]hey were simply told by it that the Labor Party must be a conscienceless and unprincipled party'. As a consequence of this opposition, a weaker pledge, calling on Labor members to vote with the majority on matters 'affecting the Labor Party, the fate of the Ministry, or calculated to establish a monopoly or confer further privileges on the already privileged classes', was accepted.²¹

The events at the November Unity conference led to a revolt of Labor parliamentarians. The views of George Black, a socialist and Labor parliamentarian, might be treated as representative of their opinions: 'The honest man will keep his word, pledge or no pledge, but no bond that was ever framed can hold the dishonest man to his vows . . . the people must allow their representatives some latitude. If they are not fit to be trusted, they are not worth having.'²²

be taken as its spokesman—also made it clear that it would not accept the solidarity pledge in its current form; Black's comments appeared in its journal.²³ Consequently, in the 1894 general election there were two groups of Labor candidates: 'independent' Labor Party members who refused to accept the pledge, and a 'solidarity' group that embraced Party discipline. After the election, many of those in the former group were absorbed into the non-Labor parties; but the solidarity group now was 'a far more cohesive unit'. In 1895, a slightly weaker pledge was adopted by a party in which the shearers' union (by this time called the Australian Workers' Union) was now prominent and powerful. Black was also reconciled to the new arrangements, and the pledge was from this time an accepted fixture in New South Wales Labor circles.²⁴

Developments in New South Wales attracted considerable attention among activists in the other colonies, although it was not their only model. The practices and performance of the Irish Nationalist Party in the House of Commons under Charles Parnell probably had some influence on Australian labour thinking about the possibilities of a strategy of support in return for concessions.²⁵ The Irish Home Rule movement attracted a good deal of attention and some support in the colonies, and prominent members of the movement visited Australia. By 1885, the Nationalists had embraced a pledge, to be signed by all candidates, that bears a striking resemblance in its basic principles to those later embraced by the Australian labour parties. It committed each pledge-bound member to 'sit, act and vote with the Irish parliamentary party'.²⁶ Developments elsewhere in the Empire also attracted attention. Working-class liberals and radicals of the 1890s watched closely (and often enviously) the Lib-Lab social experimentation of New Zealand and the work of the Progressive alliance on the London County Council, while many radical Laborites and socialists applauded the rise of the German Social Democratic Party. For them, it seemed to be the pioneer of independent political activity by working-class people, as did the Independent Labour Party in Britain.

Victorian unionists therefore looked north of the Murray for inspiration, but also beyond Australia's shores. The process of embracing a solidarity pledge in the southern colony was at once less troubled than in New South Wales, yet more protracted. The Labor Party in Victoria was dominated by the colony's traditions of liberalism and protectionism. Many of its leaders and propagandists regarded it as simply the radical wing of the 'liberal party'.²⁷ In the 1890s, the Party had great difficulty in getting its parliamentarians to accept any form of written pledge, not least because its Leader, Trenwith, who also advocated a close relationship with the liberal Turner Ministry (1894–99), persistently refused to be bound.²⁸ He and several others argued that their word was sufficient guarantee that they would behave in accordance with Labor principles; they believed that even Labor parliamentarians were responsible primarily to their constituents and their own consciences.

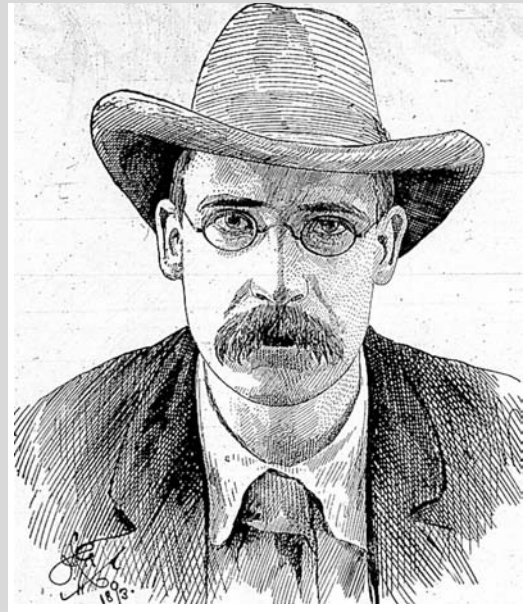
Meanwhile, Victorian labour did not seem too fussy about who participated in its proceedings. It admitted several liberals with no obvious union connections—some with very dubious claims to friendship with the working man. Middle-class liberals would certainly not have found the demands of Party discipline especially onerous before 1897. The Party, which tended to limp

AUSTRALIA IN FERMENT

The close of the nineteenth century was a time of ferment in Australian political and cultural life, a period of utopian dreams and dystopian nightmares. In one Australian novel of the 1890s—*The Coming Terror; or, The Australian Revolution* (1894) by the socialist agitator S. A. Rosa—the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt encounters in his wanderings a lost race of democratic, self-governing people. These people have no police, military or parliaments, and scarcely any private property. Nobody is forced to work, yet there is somehow plenty for all.

Even Rosa's radical imagination, however, had its limits: the lost race of the inland also maintained a strict monogamy. This aspect of their social order would have pleased members of the women's movement. Groups advocating female suffrage and the removal of women's many legal disabilities were active in Australia from the mid-1880s, and although unionists and socialists were sometimes ambivalent about or even hostile to their claims, by the mid-1890s there were many examples of cooperation between the labour and women's movements. By this time, the labour parties supported votes for women. William Maloney, a Victorian socialist (later Labor) parliamentarian, had sponsored the first women's suffrage Bill in the British Empire in 1889.

New radical political ideas were in the air. Secularists condemned religion and royalty as founded on superstition, while republicans directed their antipathy at the monarchy, and advocated the separation of the Australian colonies from the Empire. There were some calling themselves anarchists who declared that the real problem with modern society was that the state usurped the freedom of the people. Others, influenced by American populism, believed that the solution to the social problem was



Englishman William Lane helped found an unsuccessful socialist colony in Paraguay and the rather more successful Australian Labor Party. (*The Worker*, NSW, 22 July 1893; National Library of Australia)

the conversion of silver into coinage by the state.

Socialists, meanwhile, rejected capitalism as wasteful and unjust, and looked forward to a new order that would avert the looming social catastrophe. Many socialists who favoured a transition to state ownership of industry were inspired by Edward Bellamy, another American author, who wrote a utopian fantasy called *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888) about life in the year 2000. In Bellamy's utopia, inequalities of wealth were unknown, and material abundance prevailed.

Small socialist organisations, inspired by the ideas of socialist authors such as Bellamy, William Morris, Robert Blatchford and Karl Marx, were formed in the various colonies in the late 1880s and early

1890s. In Queensland, an English-born journalist named William Lane founded a newspaper called the *Boomerang* in 1887. Lane advocated a combination of socialist and nationalist ideas, and was a vicious racist. As a union official and editor of the *Worker* in the early 1890s, he advised the unions during the shearers' strike of 1891. Its failure left him devastated, and he concocted a scheme for a socialist colony called New Australia in Paraguay. In 1893, the ship the *Royal Tar* sailed for South America with over 200 colonists aboard.

Within a few months of settlement, the colony split. Lane turned out to be a raving dictator who antagonised many colonists. For years, opponents of socialism pointed to the experience of New Australia to prove that even under ideal conditions, socialism would not work. But by the time a chastened Lane migrated to New Zealand in 1899, the Labor Party he had helped found in Australia was pursuing more prosaic plans for the reform of society.

Frank Bongiorno

uneasily from one election to the next, bearing a new title each time that thinly disguised its organisational weakness, had few sanctions at its disposal in dealing with candidates who refused to sign a pledge. From around 1896, however, there was an increasingly vocal minority of Labor parliamentarians, unionists and socialist activists in Victoria dissatisfied with Trenwith's leadership and with the failure of the Party to act as an independent force. Their mouthpiece was the *Tocsin*, a radical weekly that first appeared during the 1897 election campaign. It had a different view from Trenwith about how the Labor representative should act once elected to Parliament, and declared that 'in all matters relating to [the Labor] platform, the member is merely a delegate, and should be a pledged delegate'.²⁹ The *Tocsin* was increasingly critical of the Labor Party after the 1897 election, in which Labor lost several seats. It opposed a close relationship with the liberals, and insisted on the Party's independence, which would be maintained by the enforcement of voting on Party questions by Caucus determination (the solidarity pledge) and a prohibition on members entering a cabinet in which they were not in a majority.³⁰ The radicals, however, were for the time being to be disappointed, as they failed to enforce a written pledge at the 1897 election.

Yet, despite these problems, since the Victorians were more or less united behind tariff protection, they were not as liable as their New South Wales comrades to serious fractiousness. Late in 1899, when the fate of the liberal Turner Government was at stake, the labour party—at Trenwith's instigation—agreed to a 'Solidarity pledge' and resolved to vote for the government. All but two members of the Party supported Turner. The association of Trenwith with this departure probably had more to do with his commitment to the Turner Ministry and ministerial ambitions than any desire to establish Caucus solidarity as a precedent, but from mid-1902 the Party had a pledge that committed members to vote with the majority on vital questions.³¹

The emergence of cohesive Party organisation was similarly protracted in Queensland.³² An Australian Labour Federation (ALF) executive meeting decided in 1890 that Labor candidates would be required to sign a pledge committing them to any reforms demanded by the Party and to resign if two-thirds of the Party members in their districts called on them to do so.³³

The Queenslanders also did their best to avoid the kinds of problems that had plagued the New South Wales Party by deciding at their 1892 conference ‘[t]hat on no account shall the fiscal question be regarded as a Labour Party question’.³⁴ Party organisation was loose in the first half of the decade, and divisions emerged after the 1896 general election between parliamentarians (led by Glassey) sympathetic to strategic alliances with non-labour groups, and another group, centred on the powerful ALF, which represented much of the Queensland political and industrial movement, and was jealous of the Party’s autonomy. Glassey’s position was rather like Trenwith’s in Victoria: that of a Lib–Lab leader reluctant to accept tight Party discipline. These divisions were problematic for a party that ‘had no means of insisting that its parliamentarians should vote together’.³⁵ So at the June 1898 Party convention a tougher pledge was introduced with the aim of improving solidarity. Labor ‘candidates . . . now had to promise to uphold the platform, and to withdraw from the election if not preselected’. Glassey reluctantly signed the new pledge, but others refused.³⁶ By the turn of the century, there were clear signs of increasing central control as the extra-parliamentary organisation enforced the pledge by refusing endorsement to candidates who flouted Party rules. Glassey broke with Labor in 1900, a departure emblematic of the tightening of Party discipline.³⁷

In South Australia, from the time of the United Labor Party’s (ULP) formation, its candidates ‘were required to pledge themselves before endorsement to adhere to the party, to refuse office in a non-Labor Ministry, and to resign from Parliament if defeated in a party plebiscite’.³⁸ It was also expected that ‘the decision as to what course sitting members should follow was reached in Caucus and the member was expected to follow the collective judgement of the group’.³⁹ There was still a large gap between theory and practice. In the 1893 election, nine pledged candidates were elected, but so were five unpledged candidates representing rural unions. Unpledged members were permitted to sit in Caucus until the end of the decade. When two members of the ULP, contrary to the decision of a majority of the Party, voted in 1899 to bring down the liberal Kingston Ministry (which the ULP had supported since 1893), they offered their unpledged status as justification for their behaviour. The ULP thereafter restricted membership of Caucus ‘to fully-pledged members’, although it allowed its leader, E. L. Batchelor, to accept a ministerial portfolio in 1899. He resigned as leader, but retained Party membership.⁴⁰

The practices of the colonial labour parties before Federation remain rather obscure, but it seems that before widespread acceptance of the solidarity pledge, they bore more than a passing resemblance to the kinds of Caucus meetings that had been held by pre-Labor parties and factions. These Labor Caucus meetings of the 1890s were probably more important as arenas for the discussion of tactics than policy; after all, in Labor theory, the latter was to be formulated by the Party outside Parliament. It was, however, impossible to maintain a rigid distinction between the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary wing of the Party in the day-to-day workings of the parliamentary system—a point which many parliamentarians emphasised, and some over-emphasised in

an effort to maintain their ‘independence’ from what they regarded as ‘outside’ pressure. The Victorian PLP went so far as to decide in the mid-1890s that it would no longer meet deputations at all, and prompted a predictable outcry when it applied this rule to the Trades Hall Council!⁴¹

The New South Wales Labor Party did try to distinguish itself sharply from its colonial predecessors from the outset in a number of ways: by accepting a solidarity pledge at its first meeting, for example, and by refusing initially to elect a leader. Instead, it opted for a managerial committee with five members, and McGowen only became Leader in 1894.⁴² By contrast, the Victorian Party at its first meeting in 1892 elected Trenwith, who had been a Member of Parliament since 1889,⁴³ while for similar reasons Glassey seemed the natural choice in Queensland (although he was without a seat for a time after his defeat in the 1893 election). His successor as Leader, Andy Dawson, managed to form a short-lived minority Labor government in 1899—the only pre-Federation Labor Ministry—and established a precedent that would later cause some difficulty at the federal level when he chose the Ministry himself. (He then submitted his selection to Caucus, which approved it.) It seems that it was also generally the task of the Party leader to chair meetings, which were held as required during parliamentary sittings. The parliamentary secretary or whip probably had some responsibility for organising meetings but, in any event, growing acceptance of the solidarity pledge virtually ensured that Caucus meetings would need to be held at regular intervals while Parliament was in session, a significant precedent for the FPLP. It was only the unpledged character of the Victorian labour party before 1899 that meant regular meetings were largely unnecessary to the ‘proper’ functioning of the party in that colony. Dissatisfaction with this situation was one of the factors that led to an internal party revolt, and an unsuccessful attempt at a Caucus meeting in June 1898 to knock Trenwith off his perch as leader.⁴⁴

The continuities between earlier colonial practice and Labor behaviour were perhaps clearest in Victoria. In November 1892, when Sir Bryan O’Loghlen moved a no-confidence motion in the Shiels Ministry, the labour party met and agreed that a government that supported land, absentee and income taxes as well as compulsory arbitration, ‘warranted the support of the Labor members’. It agreed ‘that any member of the party would act most inconsistently and treacherously towards his principles who would support a proposition that would involve a return to power of the reactionary Conservatives’.⁴⁵ Yet this sounds rather like the moral suasion employed by parliamentary leaders in the days before the emergence of the Labor Party, which is hardly surprising, since there was not yet a solidarity pledge or any real sanctions at the disposal of the Victorian party to enforce discipline. Members even participated with liberals in ‘Opposition’ Caucus meetings throughout the 1890s, a fair indication of the informality of the Labor Party’s institutional arrangements in Victoria at this time, as well as of its close relationship with some liberal parliamentarians.⁴⁶ In August 1894, Labor parliamentarians participated in such a meeting, and found themselves unable to act as a solid bloc in this forum. If the Labor members had held their own Caucus before the larger Opposition Caucus meeting, it either gave its

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Some of the participants in the Inter-colonial Conference of Labour held in Sydney on 24 January 1900. Back: Joseph Lesina (Qld), Albert Hinchcliffe (Qld), William Higgs (Qld), Charles McDonald (Qld), James Stewart (Qld) and John Hopher (NSW). Second row: William Carpenter (SA), Tom Price (SA), John Barrett (Vic) and J. Hyman (Vic). Front: Josiah Thomas, Jim McGowen, Billy Hughes and Chris Watson (all from NSW). Higgs, McDonald, Stewart, Barrett, Thomas, Hughes and Watson became members of the first federal Caucus in 1901. (National Library of Australia)

members a free hand, or was totally ineffective in forging unity.⁴⁷ Later in the decade, there were complaints about the irregularity of party meetings, and the general disorganisation of the Victorian party.⁴⁸ By this time, radical activists in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland had the example of the New South Wales party before them, and were eager to emulate that model.

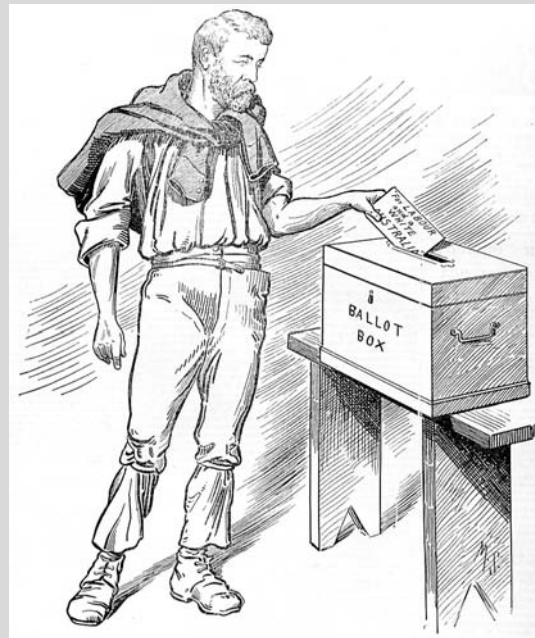
Most of the key practices associated with the ALP had thus emerged by 1900 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Yet, except in New South Wales, where the events of 1891–95 had produced a kind of ALP prototype, Party organisation was decidedly loose until quite late in the decade. It is unsurprising, then, that it was the New South Wales party that convened an intercolonial conference of labour parties to formulate a federal party and platform.⁴⁹ The conference met in Sydney in January 1900, with all of the mainland colonies represented, except Western Australia.⁵⁰ There was no parliamentary labour party in either Tasmania or Western Australia before the turn

THE WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY

In the second half of the nineteenth century, unionists were involved in many campaigns against non-white races—especially the Chinese—so it was no surprise to anybody that the early labour parties embraced the ideal of a White Australia. Fear of economic competition was one factor behind the unionists' desire for exclusion, but they were also motivated by chauvinistic ideas about the superiority of whites over other races.

In 1905, the Australian Labor Party embraced as the first point in its 'Objective' '[t]he cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity, and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community'. 'The Maintenance of a White Australia' became the first plank in both its 'Fighting' and 'General' Platforms. The ALP's strong support for the White Australia Policy until the late 1960s has contributed to a popular perception that Labor was responsible for the Policy. In reality, when the federal Parliament considered the first two major pieces of White Australia legislation during 1901—the Immigration Restriction Bill and the Pacific Islands Labourers' Bill—members of all parties endorsed the measures, which involved the prevention of non-white races from entering the Commonwealth and the repatriation of Melanesian labourers to their homelands.

Within the labour movement, there was overwhelming support for the Policy, but it did not go unquestioned. When the Melbourne Trades Hall Council debated the Federal Labor Platform adopted in Sydney in 1900, several delegates objected to the plank calling for the total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races. P. J. Brandt wanted 'to see the word persons substituted for races, as there were undesirable persons of all races'. Bob Solly, a socialist bootmaker and future member of the state Parliament, thought the issue of exclusion 'a very debatable one. It appeared



'HOW TO VOTE'. 'Total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races' was one of the planks of the Platform taken by the Labor Party to the first Federal election. It was based on a belief that coloured labour posed a threat to wages and working conditions. (The Worker, Queensland, 30 March 1900; National Library of Australia)

to him that the Britisher should rather aim at raising coloured aliens to his own level', a matter that the 'civilised nations' should soon take in hand. In the following year, the public servant, socialist and poet, Bernard O'Dowd, writing in the radical *Tocsin* newspaper under a pseudonym, condemned the White Australia Policy as undemocratic, and found at least one supporter, George Roberts, later briefly a Labor state parliamentarian. These voices were a minority, but during the twentieth century the White Australia Policy never went entirely uncontested in the labour movement.

Frank Bongiorno

of the century, although a Political Labor Party formed in Perth in 1896 required that its candidates accept a solidarity pledge.⁵¹

The Sydney conference unanimously resolved to form a Federal Labor Party, and a Platform was adopted that comprised: one adult, one vote; the initiative and referendum; the total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races; and old-age pensions.⁵² The proposals for the initiative and referendum, and 'one adult, one vote' reflected the democratic ideals at the heart of Labor's philosophy, while the plank directed against 'coloured and undesirable races' paradoxically expressed a racist vision of Australian democracy that excluded all but whites. Old-age pensions would ensure that the workers could live out their days in dignity.

It was the tariff, however, that again dogged the quest for real Labor unity. 'A high [tariff] as against a revenue tariff' appeared on the business paper, and the matter was referred to a committee that recommended the tariff be fixed so as to protect local industries without imposing excessive taxation on the working classes. Instead, the conference resolved that ALP candidates be allowed a free hand on the tariff question, but the Victorian delegates entered a protest against this provision. After the conference, the protectionist Melbourne THC, in line with the position of its conference delegates, decided that Victorian Labor candidates would be pledged to protection.⁵³ Yet even in the THC there were some who supported the policy of the free hand for the sake of Labor unity.⁵⁴ A pledge formulated by the New South Wales Labor Party after the conference was embraced by the Victorians:⁵⁵

I hereby also pledge myself if returned to the Commonwealth Parliament to do my utmost to ensure the Carrying out of the principles embodied in this Labor platform & on all other Questions to vote as a majority of the Federal Labor Party may decide at a duly Constituted Caucus meeting.⁵⁶

It was fitting that this pledge should have been proposed by New South Wales, which had paid the heaviest price for Party disunity in the 1890s.

The deliberations of January 1900 and their aftermath in many respects crystallised the experiences of the colonial labour movements in the period since the coming of responsible government, and particularly since the emergence of the labour parties of the 1890s. They recognised that the parliamentarians should be responsible to an extra-parliamentary organisation; that they were bound to follow party policy, as determined by conference; and that the decisions of a majority of Caucus should be followed by individual parliamentarians. But they also stressed the autonomy of the colonial labour parties and the limits of national unity, especially in relation to the crucial matter of tariff policy. It remains one of the most surprising of ALP triumphs, and one of the most neglected by historians, that in the absence of unity on this question the Party still managed to avoid a major split in the early Commonwealth period. Only a class-based party and movement that believed in the lessons of history, and therefore in the importance of solidarity, could have achieved this extraordinary feat.

THE FIRST CAUCUS

Stuart Macintyre

There were 24 of them who gathered in Melbourne as members of the first Commonwealth Parliament in the late autumn of 1901 and formed the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. Since the other parts of the federal structure—the Federal Conference and Federal Executive, as well as the officers who sustain the operation of the Party—were all established afterwards, these parliamentarians were in fact creating the Australian Labor Party as a national organisation. In the weeks and months that followed the first meeting on 8 May 1901, the members of Caucus determined the Party's federal Platform and also worked out their own rules and procedures. They were the founders of a body that has played a crucial role in national politics; the ALP is the only party to have maintained a continuous existence for the life of the Commonwealth.

Behind this formation of the Caucus, and the presence of its founders as elected representatives to the first national legislature, lay a meeting in Sydney more than a year earlier. It was initiated shortly after New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria voted to federate, although the Queensland voters were still at the polls and Western Australia had no plans to enter the proposed Commonwealth when preparations for the meeting began in early September 1899.¹ When delegates of the colonial labour parties met at the Sydney Trades Hall on 24 January 1900, the Commonwealth Constitution had yet to be formally enacted. They met nevertheless to affirm 'that this Conference recommends the establishment of a Federal Labor Party' and settle a Platform on which candidates could stand for the federal Parliament.²

The choice of candidates and the direction of the election campaign that

was conducted in the early months of 1901 were determined by the five state labour parties, each operating under its own name according to its particular political orientation.³ Tasmania, which had no labour party, returned two labour supporters (and their success stimulated the formation of a party later in the year), who were foundation members of the Caucus. The distribution of the remainder indicated the relative strength of the fledgling parties. In New South Wales (which contributed six Caucus members) and Queensland (seven), labour had established a clear identity as an independent political movement. In Victoria (three) and South Australia (two) it retained links with the radical wing of the liberal party. The Western Australian party (which provided four members of Caucus) had been recently formed along similar lines to New South Wales and Queensland.

The abbreviated federal Platform bore mute testimony to these variations. The delegates who met in Sydney in 1900 did not attempt to resolve the issues on which they differed, and in any case they had no authority to impose uniformity. Accordingly, they simply affirmed the four policies on which they all agreed as the basis of Labor's election campaign: electoral reform ('one adult, one vote' regardless of sex or wealth); total exclusion of 'coloured and undesirable races'; greater use of the referendum to allow direct democracy; and an old-age pension.⁴ When the new Caucus revisited the Platform after the election, it acceded to the concerns of members from smaller states and dropped the referendum, but added two additional planks: a citizen army and compulsory arbitration. Substantial differences remained on the tariff as well as other issues, and indeed many members had continuing reservations about the very basis of the new Commonwealth.

Yet in their adoption of the tight organisational form of the caucus and the pledge, the members of the first Caucus were affirming a party of a new type with a distinct identity and purpose. They were the representatives of labour, bound in common purpose to advance the interests of the workers. Whether they believed it was possible to civilise capitalism or were convinced that more drastic change was needed, they spoke and thought as the pioneers of a new and different kind of political movement. As a member of the New South Wales Parliament had put it when labour first entered that legislature ten years earlier, their aim was to 'make and unmake social conditions'.⁵

The federal parliamentarians also brought with them direct experience of the social conditions they were determined to change. Eleven of them were born in Australia, thirteen overseas, but of the immigrants all but one had been here for more than a decade. The firstcomer was William Spence (Darling, NSW), who as a small boy accompanied his parents to Victoria in 1852 as part of the Gold Rush that endowed the colonies with new wealth and energy. The latecomer was James Fowler (Perth, WA), and he arrived from Scotland in 1891, just as the good times came to an end. Nearly all the others were lured in the preceding decade by the reputation of Australia as a place where there was work at good wages for those who wanted it. For after the golden bonanza that began in the 1850s, the self-governing colonies had flourished as efficient producers of export commodities. Their natural resources attracted a flow of private investment, while their elected representatives borrowed freely in

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Members of the first Federal Labor Caucus, 1901. Back: Charles McDonald, George Pearce, Josiah Thomas, James Page, James Fowler, John Barrett, David O'Keefe. Second row: David Watkins, Thomas Brown, King O'Malley, Hugh Mahon, William Higgs, Andrew Fisher, Hugh de Largie, Frederick Bamford. Third row: William Spence, Andy Dawson, Gregor McGregor, Chris Watson, James Stewart, Egerton Batchelor, James Ronald. Front: Frank Tudor, Billy Hughes. (National Library of Australia)

London to finance the construction of urban utilities and push railway and telegraph lines into the interior. With strong and sustained growth came a demand for labour to build the new facilities, clear the bushland and bring it into production, enlarge the urban centres and provide the services their inhabitants expected. An unskilled labourer commanded a higher wage than was available in Britain. He could feed and clothe his family, leave behind the demeaning subservience to superiors in a rigid social hierarchy, and deal with his employer on a more equal basis.

The momentum of growth quickened in the 1880s. Ten of the Caucus were among more than 400 000 immigrants who came during this decade (swelling the population to 3 million). By 1901, when as parliamentarians they were entitled to £400 a year (about four times a labourer's wage), these ten settlers had clearly made their mark; but life in Australia had not always been so comfortable. Several on arrival had felt the sharp edge of the labour market, which remained susceptible to high turnover and seasonal fluctuations. When George Lansbury, a future Leader of the British Labour Party, landed in Brisbane in 1884 he found large groups of unemployed waiting on the quay and quickly returned to London.⁶ Billy Hughes (West Sydney, NSW), the future Prime Minister, made the same voyage a few months earlier and humped his

CHRIS WATSON RECALLS THE FIRST CAUCUS

“There were great men before Agamemnon”, but all the same there were an exceptional lot of able men in the first Federal Parliament,’ recalled Chris Watson. He was writing 25 years later as the Commonwealth Parliament was preparing to move to Canberra.

In this reminiscent vein he cast light on where the first Caucus met. ‘Our first Caucus room was a stuffy place in the bluestone basement of Parliament House’ in Spring Street. The basement is still used for members’ rooms, and the bare stone walls contrast with the opulence of the chambers above. ‘It was because of our gathering there,’ Watson added, ‘that Sir George Reid subsequently coined his alliterative phrase, “Steering from the steerage”’. By this time Labor had exerted its tactic of support in return for concessions to wring reforms from the two more numerous parties.

Watson’s memoir was generous in its tribute to the Labor pioneers, and also to other members of the first Parliament. After his own election to the leadership of the FPLP, it was the Speaker, Sir Frederick Holder, ‘who gave me a little section of the North Lobby as a special room, while some months later the Caucus moved upstairs

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‘A FAVOURITE CORNER OF MINE IN THE LABOUR ROOM’. Chris Watson relaxes in the Labor Party Caucus room. (The Australasian, 6 September 1902; National Library of Australia)

to what had previously been known as the Independents’ room’.

Stuart Macintyre

bluey as a bush labourer for two years before settling in Sydney. James Page (Maranoa, Qld) had preceded him by a year and worked initially as a jack-of-all-trades. James Stewart, Queensland senator and Party Whip, followed to the same port five years later to scratch a living as a railway worker, fencer and farm labourer. Gregor McGregor, a fellow Scot and Leader of the Labor Party in the Senate, had worked his passage to South Australia a decade earlier, and suffered a serious accident while felling which left him with hopelessly damaged eyesight. There was neither compensation for workplace injuries, nor welfare provision for men unable to earn a living, and McGregor had to rely on memory to keep working and earning.⁷

Other immigrants who were there in Caucus by 1901 had come to Australia with readily transferable occupational skills. Hugh de Largie (Senator, WA), Andrew Fisher (Wide Bay, Qld) and Josiah Thomas (Barrier, NSW) were miners who found work in that industry here. Chris Watson (Bland, NSW), whom Caucus elected as the first Party Leader, came to Sydney in 1886 as a compositor

and briefly worked as a stablehand at Government House, but soon obtained employment in the printing industry. James Ronald (Southern Melbourne, Vic.) was a Presbyterian clergyman called in 1888 to a ministry in that city. King O'Malley (MHR, Tas.), was a livewire salesman from the United States who quickly became a successful insurance agent; and Hugh Mahon (Coolgardie, WA) was a journalist who followed the same profession here. Mahon might be regarded as a political exile since he had fled the United Kingdom in 1882 after a spell in gaol for activity in Parnell's Irish Land League.

The national origins testified to the character of the colonies as places of British settlement. No fewer than seven of the first Caucus came from Scotland, most of them from the central industrial belt of that country, but with a couple from the Highlands and one from Orkney. Three were from England, although Hughes was of Welsh ancestry and the Cornish Josiah Thomas had worked in Mexico. Just one, Mahon, was Irish. The remaining two immigrants were more reticent about their origins. O'Malley claimed to be a Canadian but was probably a citizen of the United States, where he had been educated and had worked before crossing the Pacific. Watson came to Sydney from New Zealand and claimed his father was an immigrant seaman who shipped out of that country. In fact the father was a German-Chilean and John Christian Watson began life as Johan Cristian Tanck before altering the spelling of the Christian names after his mother returned to New Zealand and married a miner named Watson.⁸

For both men the subterfuge allowed the later political career: only British subjects were eligible to sit in Parliament, a condition which precluded citizens of the United States and Chile but was satisfied by Canadian and New Zealand nationality. Beyond this legal consideration lay the force of the Labor Party's insistence that Australia remain closed to all 'coloured and undesirable races'. The obsession with race as a marker of suitability for membership of the Australian workforce and nation could accommodate minorities of other European descent, but it accorded a special preference for the racial admixture known as the Briton.

The native-born members of the Caucus comprised a higher proportion of skilled workers. John Barrett, a Victorian senator, worked from the late 1870s as a tinsmith. Egerton Batchelor (MHR, SA) was a fitter. William Higgs, a Queensland senator, was a compositor. Charles McDonald (Kennedy, Qld) was a watchmaker. George Pearce (Senator, WA) was a carpenter; Frank Tudor (Yarra, Vic.) a hatter; and Andy Dawson (Senator, Qld) and David Watkins (Newcastle, NSW) were both miners. Some had begun in manual occupations and then established their own businesses, illustrating the substantial possibilities for self-improvement during the 1880s. Fred Bamford (Herbert, Qld) had been a cabinet-maker, then a government inspector and finally a publican. David O'Keefe (Senator, Tas.) had been a labourer, a farmhand and a miner before he became a storekeeper and later began a newspaper. Thomas Brown (Canobolas, NSW) had his own farm. William Spence had begun work in the 1850s as a shepherd and later a butcher's boy, but by the 1870s he was managing a mine.

These locals were also less footloose. Higgs moved as a young tradesman from Sydney to Brisbane, Pearce from South Australia to Western Australia.

KING O'MALLEY

King O'Malley was the last survivor of the first Caucus and it gave him great satisfaction to have outlived Billy Hughes.

I retain a vivid recollection of visiting O'Malley in his home at 58 Bridport Street, South Melbourne, only a few months before his death in 1953. He was bearded and bow-tied. I was very impressed by his nervous energy and torrential speech, but having read Arthur Hoyle's *King O'Malley* (1981), I don't know how much, if any, I can believe of what he told me. Hoyle concludes that O'Malley was born on 4 July 1858 in Valley Falls, Kansas. (The birthday, shared with Yankee Doodle Dandy, is highly suspicious.) When O'Malley remarried in May 1910 in Melbourne, he described himself as a widower of 51, suggesting a birth year of 1858 or 1859.

O'Malley told me that he had been born in Canada, just over the border, and that he was in his 100th year. In the 1947 *Who's Who in Australia*, the editor Alec H. Chisholm noted: 'He is approximately 90 years of age—a statement published in 1943 quoted him as saying he was "close on 90", a longevity which he attributes to having been a total abstainer all his life.'

O'Malley worked in insurance, banking, sales and real estate in several US states and claimed to have been a journalist in Arizona. He worked with, or over, some fundamentalist churches and claimed to have created one of his own—the Waterlily Rockbound Church—the Redskin Church of the Cayuse, of which he was the first and only bishop. He married an acolyte, Rosy Wilmot, who died in 1886.

He arrived in Melbourne in August 1888 and worked as an insurance agent, moving to Hobart, Zeehan, Launceston, Coolgardie and Adelaide. In January 1896 he became a candidate for the South Australian House of Assembly, insisting that he was, after all, a Canadian, although brought up in the United States. He was



O'Malley, elected as a Protectionist, joined Labor's ranks at the first Caucus meeting and became one of the FPLP's most colourful and, at times, controversial politicians. (Hal Gye, Punch, 28 July 1910; National Library of Australia)

returned as an Independent as one of two members for Encounter Bay. He initiated legislation banning barmoids in South Australia which remained on the statute books until Don Dunstan repealed it in the 1960s. In 1899 he was narrowly defeated in Encounter Bay, and in 1900 moved back to Zeehan.

In March 1901, as a Protectionist, O'Malley was one of five Members elected to the House of Representatives for Tasmania, the state being polled as a single division. He campaigned for compulsory arbitration, a usury law and a Federal Department of Labour, winning strong support from the miners. He joined the Labor Caucus at its first meeting on 8 May 1901. In December 1903, when Tasmania was divided into separate seats, he was elected as Labor Member for the seat of

Darwin (later renamed Braddon) and held it until 1917.

He did not enjoy good relations with Andrew Fisher and Hughes, who excluded him from the first (1904), second (1908–09) and fourth (1914–15) Labor Ministries. However, his influence with Caucus saw him elected twice, serving as Minister for Home Affairs from 1910 to 1913 and then from 1915 to 1916.

O'Malley was an ardent campaigner for a national bank of 'deposit, issue, exchange and reserve', combining the characteristics of a publicly owned trading bank and a reserve bank. He set up a ginger group, 'the torpedo brigade', which was committed to a national bank, even at the risk of splitting Labor. Fisher proposed establishing the Commonwealth Bank as a general banking business, an approach firmly opposed by O'Malley. Fisher's model prevailed, with Hughes' support. In later life, O'Malley insisted on his paternity of the Commonwealth Bank, even though it was radically different from his original model.

O'Malley was an enthusiast for a new national capital, which he hoped would be

called Shakespeare or Myola. He was prominent in newsreels when the Canberra site was inaugurated by the Governor-General, Lord Denman, in 1913. He strongly supported Walter Burley Griffin's plans and ensured their adoption, at least in part.

He was responsible for beginning the transcontinental railway and took the blame for scandals and delays in the construction. He was an early and ardent supporter of the rights of women and opposed all forms of legal discrimination. He endowed scholarships in home economics for girls.

O'Malley was a pacifist, increasingly hostile to Australia's involvement in World War I, and he joined the radical anti-war faction which opposed Hughes and campaigned against conscription. The Darwin electorate voted 'Yes' in the 1916 Conscription Referendum and O'Malley was heavily defeated in May 1917. He contested Denison in 1919 for the ALP and Bass in 1922 as an independent, after he dropped out of the ALP.

Barry Jones

Bamford and McDonald travelled as boys to Queensland from New South Wales and Victoria, respectively, but the other seven Australian-born members of Caucus put down deep local roots. Frank Tudor, admittedly, had used his trade skill to travel widely and lived for several years in England; Andy Dawson also had a spell in Western Australia.

The overwhelming majority of the immigrant members of the Caucus arrived in Australia as young men. Leaving aside Spence, who accompanied his parents as a child, Watson was the youngest at 19 years of age when he landed here and Stewart the oldest at 37. The remaining eleven were all in their twenties. Just four came with wives. While all eventually married, initially they roamed widely as 'lone hands', untrammelled by family responsibilities and with a corresponding greater mobility than the locals. When they did settle down and take partners, there was a fair chance the bride would be the landlady's daughter; both Fisher and Hughes conformed to this tendency. The Australian-born were more notably uxorious: all but three of them married in their twenties, but then their higher occupational status made it easier to take on the role of family breadwinner.

All but four of the 24 Caucus members were born between 1857 and 1870. They joined the workforce during the 1870s and 1880s when conditions were

favourable to labour and they were soon drawn into efforts to improve them. Batchelor joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers when he was 17 and was quickly elected to the executive. William Higgs became the secretary of the New South Wales Typographical Society at the age of 24. George Pearce was a leading member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners in Western Australia when he was 23. These were established craft unions that restricted their membership to skilled workers and were concerned to maintain the customs of the trade. By the 1880s, however, there was an increasing effort to organise other occupational groups and to foster greater cohesiveness. John Barrett, for example, helped found a Tinsmiths' Society in Victoria in 1883, and subsequently held office as Secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. By 1890 there were over 1000 unions with a membership of around 200 000.

Most of these unions remained small and limited in their capacity. Employers could recognise them and agree to the standards of pay and conditions they sought, or disregard them and continue to recruit wage-earners who were prepared to work on the terms offered. The crucial development in the 1880s was the spread of union coverage among workers in the key export industries—the shearers and metal miners—as well as those in maritime transport and the coal industry. Spence had played a leading role in organising the Victorian goldminers, while in the later 1880s Thomas became president of the miners working in the rich silver lodes of Broken Hill. Dawson took the same office among the goldminers at Charters Towers, where McDonald helped form a shop assistants' union. De Largie, Fisher and Watkins all held positions in miners' lodges on the New South Wales and Queensland coalfields. Spence's appointment in 1886 as foundation President of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union began a rapid growth in the coverage of the 20 000 men who worked at that calling.

Associated with this upsurge of union membership was a heightened consciousness of the interests of labour. These men were seized with the possibilities that comprehensive working-class organisation opened for a thoroughgoing transformation of social conditions. 'Unionism came to the Australian bushman as a religion,' Spence would recall of this evangelical phase. 'It came bringing salvation from years of tyranny.'⁹ Spence himself had been a Sunday School superintendent and lay preacher. Others of the Caucus shared a religious background. Ronald was a Presbyterian minister and Brown had trained for the same ministry before ill health forced him back to his farm. Fisher was another Sunday School superintendent and Thomas another lay preacher who would object vehemently when the Commonwealth Parliament adjourned for the running of the Melbourne Cup. Protestantism was the most common religion: there were six Presbyterians, five Anglicans, three Methodists, two Congregationalists, a number of members of other Nonconformist sects, and only three Catholics. Some were merely nominal adherents, but around half of the Caucus worshipped on Sunday.

Few members of the first Caucus took much interest in sport, although Chris Watson was a notable exception, for their time outside work was taken up with other forms of activity. They were to be found in lodges, mechanics institutes and literary societies, co-operatives, temperance groups, hospital boards and

other local organisations aimed at mutual support and improvement. Here they participated in what was sometimes called rational recreation, to distinguish it from the frivolous pursuit of personal pleasure. Here also they acquired the skills of organisational leadership among working-class communities and built up their local support. Their activities were designed to assist others, to ameliorate living conditions through collective endeavour and to reclaim human dignity from the grip of ignorance and selfishness—both Christians and secularists among the Caucus subscribed to this social gospel. ‘It is useless to go on preaching from Sabbath to Sabbath asking men to be better,’ Spence proclaimed, ‘the New Unionism is to deal with those evils in a practical manner.’¹⁰

Then, with the onset of the 1890s, their youthful hope—that organised labour would be accorded its rights—was dashed. Pastoralists had taken on substantial commitments to finance expansion and were finding it harder to keep up returns as prices fell during the 1880s. Confronted by growing union demands, they formed their own union. Other employers also resolved to resist the combinations of their employees with similar common purpose, and the two sides, labour and capital, confronted each other as massed forces across an increasingly acrimonious divide. Hostilities broke out in the winter of 1890 when the shipowners refused to allow the Marine Officers Association to affiliate with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The marine officers walked off their ships, the waterside workers refused to load them, the coalminers refused to supply the ships, the coalowners locked them out and the pastoralists broke off negotiations with the shearers. Without coal and transport, manufacturing and other industries ground to a halt.

The Maritime Strike, as it became known, was the first major industrial conflict in Australia. The colonial governments responded with harsh repression. In Victoria the Chief Secretary, Alfred Deakin, called out volunteers to break the picket lines at the port of Melbourne. In New South Wales the Premier, Henry Parkes, sent special police with firearms to Circular Quay in Sydney to clear a passage for wool-draws. The Queensland Premier, Samuel Griffith, read the Riot Act and mobilised the defence forces. The unions were soon crushed in the cities, although the shearers and miners continued to fight against a series of further demands by the employers over the following years. The bush was ablaze as camps of shearers laid siege to pastoral stations, and armed detachments broke them up. In Queensland fourteen of the strike leaders were tried for conspiracy and twelve of them gaoled for three years.

The strikes and lockouts marked the end of economic prosperity. Much of the foreign investment in Australia had been drawn into speculative ventures and by 1890 British investors were becoming nervous about Australian borrowers. After some failed, there was a run on the banks and by 1893 most of them were forced to suspend payments. The financial crisis quickly spread into the rest of the economy. Between 1891 and 1895 the Australian domestic product shrank by 30 per cent. Jobs disappeared, while employers cut wages and conditions to the bone. By 1893, when unemployment passed 25 per cent, the inability to earn a living affected even those skilled workers who had previously enjoyed security. William Somerville, a founder of the Labor Party in Western Australia, had qualified as an engineer in the late 1880s and then for the next

five years he tramped the roads of New South Wales and Victoria in search of work. He learnt 'that in our sunny Australia in times of depression if a man has too stiff a back to beg he can starve like a dog'.¹¹

Many of the Caucus members were caught up in these events and they affected all. Spence, as leader of the shearers' union, played the most central role and his long account of *Australia's Awakening*, subtitled *Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, devotes more than 100 pages to the perfidy of the employers, the savagery of the courts and the complicity of the press. There is also a chapter on 'Catching "Scabs"', for the employers defeated the unions with strikebreakers they recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. A man's reputation, insisted Spence, rested upon his steadfastness at this time of trial. 'The lowest term of reproach is to call a man a "scab"'.¹²

McDonald represented the Queensland unions during the pastoral strike there and won the nickname of 'Fighting Charlie'. Dawson was secretary of the strike committee at Charters Towers, lost his job in the mines and was black-listed. Another victim was Josiah Thomas, who travelled to Adelaide and Brisbane to raise funds for the Broken Hill miners when they were on strike in 1892. During his absence the other union officials were charged with conspiracy and, when Thomas denounced the prosecution, his commission as a justice of the peace was withdrawn. Thomas was also sacked by BHP and could find work only as a labourer. Hugh de Largie was blacklisted by the coalmining companies after he represented the Mount Kembla miners during the Maritime Strike, and resettled in Western Australia, while George Pearce made the same move because he lost work in Adelaide as a carpenter during the Depression.

Out of these humiliations the Australian Labor Party was born. Trade unionists were occasionally elected to the colonial parliaments before 1890, but in the immediate aftermath of the Maritime Strike organised labour turned to political action of a new kind. The decision in November 1890 of the Trades and Labour Council in Sydney to establish Labor Electoral Leagues throughout the colony led, after the general election of 1891, to a labour party of 35 members in a Legislative Assembly with 141 members. In Victoria the 1892 election returned 11 members, in Queensland there were 16 by 1893 and in South Australia 10. The turn to parliamentary action was partly a response to the repressive role of government during the strikes and lockouts: Deakin, Parkes and Griffith, all self-styled liberals, stood revealed as false friends of labour who had used the legislature, the police, the army and the judiciary to abet the designs of the employers. A labour party could restore through political action the rights of labour that the shrunken unions were unable to protect. Hence the Platforms of the early labour parties included limitation of the working day, prohibition of sweating, safer working conditions and legal protection for trade unions.

More than this, the creation of labour parties intensified the belief in a working-class crusade for emancipation from servitude and poverty. Billy Hughes, who in 1893 was a fervent member of the Socialist League and helped establish a weekly newspaper, the *New Order*, catches the tone: 'Put briefly, the idea as to combat, and peradventure, overthrow the hordes of Capitalism, spread enlightenment throughout the Universe, awaken the slumbering masses, substi-

tute for the effete and rotten existing social system a “New Order” and to do all this by means of a Paper.’¹³ The labour pioneers were great believers in the power of the printed word, and a quarter of them ran newspapers during the 1890s.

They also read widely in the radical and socialist literature that circulated through the labour movement. Pearce and Spence were among the Australian activists who between 1906 and 1907 responded to the invitation of the Editor of the *Sydney Worker* to choose ‘the twelve best books for an enquirer into the aims and principles of the Labour movement’. They nominated those of Charles Kingsley and John Ruskin; Marx’s *Capital* and Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty*; Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and Robert Blatchford’s *Merrie England*; the *Fabian Essays* and the Webbs’ *History of Trade Unionism*; Thorold Rogers’ *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* and Hobson’s *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*.¹⁴ There were some notable omissions: no William Morris, nothing by Kropotkin or other anarchists, nothing on women and the family, not even Mill or Bebel and, just as remarkable, no William Lane with his revelation of the serpent set loose in *The Workingman’s Paradise*. Even so, this was a broad canon of the ethical and scientific criticisms of capitalism and the evolutionary and revolutionary paths to the new order.

There were already divisions in the labour movement over the merits of the parliamentary path. None of the colonial labour parties came close to achieving a majority—the Queensland one took office in 1899 but it had only 13 members in an Assembly of 47 and lasted in government for just seven days. Some members wanted a free hand to barter with the other parties, some insisted on independence. Some resisted the pledge to vote as the Party directed; some exerted their influence to make the Party serve their will. As Frank Bongiorno relates, the supremacy of Caucus had to be established. Progress was slow and many chafed at the compromises parliamentary politics imposed. Even in the mid-1890s members of the Socialist League in Sydney complained that those comrades who went into Parliament drifted out of active involvement, and there were more doctrinaire sects who would have nothing to do with the illusion of parliamentary reform.

Most of the members of the first Caucus professed themselves to be socialists, although some preferred not to stress the allegiance and the FPLP adopted a euphemistic version of the socialist objective only in 1905. All of them believed in the efficacy of parliamentary activity; in the language of the time, they were ‘possibilists’ who held that the state could be made to improve the lives of workers. Most of them also had direct experience of parliamentary life. Fifteen of the 24 had served as members of their colonial legislatures. Dawson had been Premier and Fisher a Cabinet member in Queensland, although a week in office hardly constituted a ministerial apprenticeship. Batchelor had been permitted by the South Australian Caucus to join a non-Labor government and served as Minister for Education and Agriculture from 1899 to 1901. Others had served on parliamentary committees and royal commissions. Compared to Barton’s Ministry in 1901, or the front bench of Reid’s Opposition, the Caucus members were novices in government business but they brought substantial knowledge of parliamentary politics.

GREGOR MCGREGOR

Among those able men in the first parliament—we could take liberties with Horace and say he was one of the great men—stood Gregor McGregor, who was chosen at the first Caucus meeting as Labor Leader in the Senate.

McGregor was short and sturdy, a Highlander who had come to Australia from the shipyards on the Clyde and worked as a farm labourer in rural South Australia. He had also been a wrestler and always enjoyed a political fight. Dour and brutally direct in debate, he was widely respected for his absolute integrity. The Melbourne *Punch* described him in 1901 as ‘a rough-looking Scotchman, with a dry, well defined vein of humour and a high contralto voice; evidently a man of grit, and certainly one of considerable natural ability’.

An accident while felling trees had seriously impaired his sight. *Punch* noted that ‘he can only see objects in the best possible light and papers have to be read to him’. Watson recognised his comrade as ‘a powerful force in our party because of his political sagacity and perfect loyalty. His physical defect in no way dulled his splendid intellect, on the contrary it appeared to sharpen his faculties and though he never saw them he knew the Standing Order by rote’. A devout Presbyterian and teetotaler, he opposed the reading of prayers in Parliament as an impious ‘parade of religion’.

It was McGregor who announced in 1901



Labor Senate leader from 1901 to 1915, McGregor overcame near blindness to be one of Labor's most effective representatives. (David Low; National Library of Australia)

that the Labor Party was ‘for sale, and we will get the auctioneer when he comes, and take care that he is the right man’. So he did, and afterwards he anchored the Labor Party in office until 1914, when he succumbed to heart failure. The *Bulletin* farewellled him as ‘a rough-hewn old man’ who commanded ‘universal respect’.

Stuart Macintyre

The subsequent political careers of the members of the first Caucus seem to confirm the suspicions of the critics of Parliament. Twelve of the 24 original members of the FLP ended up on the other side. Barrett went first, in 1903; he refused to seek re-endorsement for the Senate, stood as an independent and lost. Dawson and Ronald suffered the same fate in 1906. Fowler defected in 1909 and was returned as a Liberal. Bamford, De Largie, Pearce and Thomas all followed Hughes out of the Labor Party in 1916 over the conscription issue. Watson, a former Leader, had retired from the Parliament but helped organise Hughes’ Nationalist Party. Spence supported Hughes on conscription but claimed to have been tricked and was allowed to resign from the Party; even so, he stood in the next election as a Nationalist. Higgs held firm against

conscription but in 1919 supported Hughes in his attempt to gain extra federal powers, denounced the tyranny of the Pledge and was expelled in 1920. To these twelve we might add Tom Brown who, by 1916, was a member of the New South Wales Parliament; he stuck by the Labor Party, but was defeated in the next election and ended up as secretary to Hughes. Some of the defectors succumbed to the comforts of office but others were impelled by beliefs as strong as those that had brought them into politics in the first place. Their subsequent paths attest both to the diversity of those who gathered in 1901 and the breadth of their common purpose.

Who, finally, was not there at that meeting on 8 May? Conspicuous absentees include James McGowen, the Labor Leader in New South Wales, who narrowly missed election to the federal Parliament, and his colleague William Holman, who decided to stay on in state politics. McGowen might well have defeated Watson for the federal leadership in 1901, although he was a Labor stalwart of the old school; Holman was more naturally gifted than his friend and future federal Leader, Hughes. William Trenwith, the Labor Leader in Victoria and the only labour man elected to the Federal Convention, also stayed in state politics, but he was too close to the liberals for the Party mood in 1901. Albert Hinchcliffe, a trade union stalwart in Queensland, would have brought valuable organisational skills, but Spence's unsuccessful political career demonstrated that union leaders did not necessarily flourish in Parliament. William Lane, the fiery socialist journalist, had a mesmeric influence in the early 1890s but he had abandoned Australia in the aftermath of the great strikes to form a socialist colony in Paraguay. Mary Gilmore, schoolteacher and later a poet of legendary stature in the labour movement, could not have been there, for she was in Paraguay also and, in any case, women were not yet entitled to sit in federal Parliament or even to vote, except in South Australia and Western Australia. The first Caucus, then, was broadly representative of the labour movement as it had formed out of the experiences of the late nineteenth century—a white brotherhood that was exclusive in its composition and outlook, and which nevertheless aspired to a more decent, democratic and equal Australia.

LEADING THE WORLD: 1901–16

Ross McMullin

The first Caucus meeting of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party took place in a stuffy basement room at Parliament House, Melbourne, on 8 May 1901. There were 22 members present, including O'Malley and Page, who joined Caucus right from the outset although neither had campaigned as Labor candidates at the 1901 election. Two who did were absent—Hughes and Mahon. Dawson chaired the meeting, an acknowledgment of his unique status within Caucus as a former Premier. McDonald, whose meticulous bush lawyer attributes were prominent in the FPLP's early years, formally moved the formation of a federal party; Ronald seconded. Stewart became the initial Caucus Secretary. The question of leadership was considered next. Thomas proposed (Fisher seconding) that two representatives should be chosen as Caucus spokesmen, to represent the members of each chamber. The Senators chose McGregor. Thomas moved that the House of Representatives spokesman should be Watson, while McDonald proposed Fisher; all the Queenslanders voted for Fisher, but the majority preferred Watson. Labor had advanced further in New South Wales than in any other colony, and Watson had been instrumental in that progress; his conspicuous leadership qualities were widely acknowledged.

At that inaugural meeting Caucus also discussed its own procedures. A committee of six was formed to draft rules and a constitution; the scrupulous representation of each state foreshadowed the tenacious hold the dubious concept of 'states rights' would exert on federal Labor. Agreement on cohesive procedures eventually emerged. Labor would proclaim its independence by sitting on the cross-benches in both houses. Caucus would meet weekly (usually

on Wednesday) when Parliament was sitting, and more often if necessary, with the Leader usually in the Chair; attendance of one-third of the Labor MPs would constitute a quorum. Caucus members could vote as they wished on tariff issues, but on all matters relating to the Party Platform they would be obliged to conform to the majority Caucus view. That Platform was amended, but its coverage remained limited enough to allow considerable flexibility. Of the four items in the fighting Platform Labor had campaigned on at the federal election, three were retained, one (the initiative and referendum) was deleted and two (compulsory arbitration and a citizen army) were added.

Support in return for concessions was the obvious tactical approach for the FPLP. Throughout the first decade of federal politics the parliamentary situation was unwieldy; there were three parties of similar strength, and none managed a majority in either chamber. With the Protectionists and Free Traders fundamentally divided over the tariff, the Barton Protectionist government needed Labor's support in both houses. Support in return for concessions suited Watson's temperament, and he was familiar with its implementation in New South Wales. 'We are for sale,' declared McGregor,¹ whose blunt forthrightness contrasted with Watson's smooth tactfulness and negotiating felicity.

But how much support, and how many concessions? Allowing Caucus members a free vote on tariff matters made sense—trying to bind them would only have produced the kind of disastrous upheaval that devastated New South Wales Labor in the 1890s—but the upshot was that the FPLP's bargaining power with the other parties was reduced, since it could not provide support on what they saw as the most important issue. Moreover, its capacity to deliver the numbers at other times was limited because Caucus could only be bound on the five issues specified in the Platform. Accordingly, Labor members were able to respond to much parliamentary business flexibly and independently of their Caucus colleagues. They disagreed on various issues, including the Boer War and the legislation establishing the High Court, as well as the numerous votes that punctuated tedious tariff debates. Although this flexible approach at times endangered the government, the Protectionists remained in office until the second federal election in December 1903.

Labor's representatives acquitted themselves well in the first federal Parliament. Those first 24 Caucus members came from different (or hardly existing) colonial Labor parties. For most of them Melbourne was a strange city, and some colleagues were strangers as well. Although some personal tensions were inevitable—Hughes and O'Malley, for example, rapidly developed a mutual antipathy—their common devotion to their cause drew them together. Their isolation was another cohesive influence; only Tudor and Ronald could go home to their families each evening. Some Labor MPs moved into a boarding house together. The long parliamentary sittings and the time it took to travel between Victoria and Western Australia soon convinced Pearce to settle his family in Melbourne; other non-Victorians—including Mahon, Hughes and Fisher—later followed suit. The pioneers, feeling their way tentatively in their new environment, relied on each other in preparing speeches on unfamiliar topics; staff assistance for backbenchers was decades away. Their presence in Melbourne benefited Victorian Labor appreciably—they were big drawcards at branch

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Chris Watson addresses the Parliament from Labor's position as the 'Corner Party'. The original caption on the photograph stated 'Our Party's principal aim is to prevent anything in the way of private monopolies'. (The Australasian, 6 September 1902; National Library of Australia)

meetings—and the trips some of them made to Tasmania were similarly helpful in that state.

Of all the issues canvassed in the first federal Parliament none was more sacrosanct to the FPLP than White Australia. It headed the revised Platform; the first significant measures of the Barton government, so reliant on Labor support, enshrined it in legislation. The labour movement remained vigilant on this issue, and the rephrased top priority on the Platform became 'Maintenance of White Australia' at the second interstate Labor conference in December 1902. Other Platform revisions were decided at that gathering, which once again adopted a Senate-like formula for representation—six delegates for each state—that was to remain incongruous for decades while Labor was attacking the democratic shortcomings of the Senate and threatening to abolish it. Uniform adult suffrage at federal elections having been introduced in the *Franchise Act*, it was accordingly deleted from the Platform, vigilant maintenance being regarded as unnecessary in this instance. (Labor, unlike the other parties, had voted solidly in favour of women's suffrage for federal elections; Mahon and Ronald in fact broke the almost universal silence concerning Aborigines by supporting Indigenous rights in this context.) Compulsory arbitration was now second only to White Australia on the revised Platform, followed by old-age pensions, a citizen defence force and three new insertions—nationalisation of monopolies, restriction of public borrowing, and navigation laws. The 1902 conference also refined the Pledge: the commitment that all federal Labor candidates now had to make was to withdraw if not preselected, to do their utmost to implement the Platform, and to vote with the Caucus majority on all Platform questions.

railway dispute in 1903. Labor insisted that the Barton government's Conciliation and Arbitration Bill should cover public servants, but Fisher's amendment to that effect was narrowly defeated; when McDonald moved that railway workers should be covered, however, this amendment was carried. Barton antagonised the labour movement by abandoning the Bill altogether. Labor campaigned vigorously on this issue at the ensuing federal election, and achieved satisfying gains in both houses. Overall, however, the 1903 election left the parliamentary situation even more intractable. Barton's successor, Deakin, fatalistically re-introduced the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, making it clear he would resign if an amendment extending its coverage to state public servants were carried. The FPLP was just as resolute. Fisher moved that amendment, and it was carried; Deakin resigned, and advised the Governor-General to send for Watson. On the afternoon of Saturday, 23 April 1904, excited FPLP members gathered for a special Caucus meeting, where their Leader, his blue eyes shining, told them he had been commissioned to form the first national Labor government in the world.

Caucus rapture was qualified by uncertainty about how to proceed. A lengthy debate ensued about how the Ministry would be chosen, whether non-Labor identities should be included and, if so, how many; in the end Caucus gave Watson 'a free hand'.² That evening Watson invited two automatic inclusions, Hughes and Batchelor (Boothby, SA), to join his deliberations. Hughes, the FPLP's only lawyer, was an unlikely shrinking violet, but his legal qualifications were too recently attained for him to be comfortable as Attorney-General; that portfolio was offered to one of Deakin's radical Victorian Protectionists, H. B. Higgins, who accepted (unlike the other Protectionist Watson approached, C. C. Kingston) and became the only minister ever to serve in a national Labor Cabinet without being a Party member. The other ministers eventually chosen were Fisher, McGregor, Dawson and Mahon.

Many non-Labor identities, appalled by this unprecedented phenomenon of a Labor government, were determined—despite Deakin's assurances about 'the utmost fair play'³—not to let the new Ministry consolidate in office. Its vulnerability in the face of their manoeuvring prompted Caucus to authorise an approach to Deakin to explore the feasibility of an alliance with progressive Protectionist elements. But the Protectionists were so divided themselves on the issue, Deakin reported back, that a coalition was impossible in 'present circumstances'.⁴ So the government struggled on alone. Watson, toiling valiantly to implement Labor policy without the parliamentary numbers, became increasingly frustrated: 'I despair of seeing any good come out of this Parliament,' he told Higgins.⁵ In fact his Cabinet's competent administration was significant and worthwhile in itself, gradually accustoming Australians to the notion of a national Labor government. In August, however, when an amendment was carried against the government on the issue of preference to unionists, Watson resigned.

The FPLP's internal debate about the wisdom of coalitions resumed in earnest. After meetings with the more progressive Protectionists—these three gatherings remain the only recorded occasions when Caucus met formally with non-Labor MPs—a document was published outlining alliance terms. But the

REACTIONS TO THE WATSON GOVERNMENT

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The Watson Ministry, 1904. Standing: Egerton Batchelor, Andy Dawson, Andrew Fisher, Hugh Mahon, Billy Hughes. Seated: Gregor McGregor, Chris Watson, Henry Bournes Higgins (the only non-FPLP member to serve in a Labor Ministry). (National Library of Australia)

Contrary to some expectations, the sky did not fall in with the advent of the world's first national Labor government. 'It is hard, looking back, to understand what a strange and revolutionary development this seemed,' wrote Higgins' niece, Nettie Palmer, in her biography of Higgins. The Prime Minister would be a compositor who had earned a crust (when employment in his chosen trade was elusive) shovelling manure at Government House. His Cabinet would include miners, a labourer, even a journalist (Mahon) who was an Irish fanatic! The Melbourne *Argus* (25 April 1904) was affronted by the 'temerity' of this 'socialistic band', who had 'practically no experience of public or private business'. The new ministry 'will exist entirely on sufferance', the paper sniffed, and 'has no claim to an extended life'.

Alarmist reactions from London newspapers prompted Watson to issue an urgent statement of reassurance about his government's financial intentions. The *Financial News* declared that it felt sorry for Australia. According to *The Times* (27 April), the 'experiment' of a national Labor government 'will be watched with

very deep interest here', but it was likely to prove a 'painful as well as salutary' jolt to citizens who 'desire to be governed on the principles which are accepted as sound in this country'. The *Pall Mall Gazette* (reported in the Melbourne *Age*, 25 April) hoped that the experience of office would 'broaden the minds and sober the views of the Labor leaders'.

The saving grace, conservatives in both Australia and Britain pointed out, was that the unpalatable reality of a Labor government would impel the two non-Labor parties to get serious about combining to thwart Labor's advance. This impetus was welcomed by the *Sydney Mail* (11 May), which confidently predicted that the prospect of being 'governed by a minority of extremists' would see the non-Labor parties forming 'a solid safe party'. Similarly, the *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 April) looked forward to the accelerated emergence of a non-Labor coalition; Labor's advance had tainted Australian federal politics with 'abuses' that should be urgently 'purged'.

Ross McMullin

inevitable condition of such an alliance—immunity for these allies at election time—was deplored by other Labor activists; the seats held by these radical Protectionists were precisely the ones most vulnerable to Labor capture. There were insistent anti-coalitionists inside Caucus too, notably young newcomer Charlie Frazer (Kalgoorlie, WA).

At Labor's 1905 Federal Conference the Victorian State Secretary, supported by Frazer, advocated the banning of alliances unless approved by a special federal conference. Watson defended himself vigorously. He had been influential in the downfall twelve days earlier of the government headed by George Reid, who had embarked on a cynical anti-Labor propaganda offensive, denouncing the 'Socialist tiger' at every opportunity. Watson had encouraged Deakin to move against Reid, and Deakin's return to the prime ministership had been underpinned by Watson's assurance (ratified by Caucus) of more committed, less flexible support than the FPLP had previously given the Protectionists. The compromise outcome at the Conference was that alliances would be permitted only until the following election, and there would be no immunity for coalition allies. Frazer spearheaded another motion at the 1905 Conference that unsettled Watson. The selection of ministers had traditionally been the prerogative of the government leader, but the young goldfields member wanted Caucus to choose, an innovation consistent with Labor principles of equality and decision-making by the majority; when 'selected' was replaced by 'recommended', Conference approved his motion.⁶

Despite Conference's refusal to entertain electoral immunity for parliamentary allies, Caucus announced the names of eleven Protectionist MPs who should not be opposed by Labor candidates at the next election. When it occurred, in December 1906, three of those eleven did not stand; only one of the others had to contend with an endorsed Labor candidate, and he held his seat. That Deakin also had a Labor opponent (Ballarat grocer Jim Scullin) Watson considered 'a great mistake';⁷ after Deakin was re-elected with a reduced group of Protectionists, Watson urged him to continue as Prime Minister. 'As you know, our party is not anxious for office', Watson assured Deakin; 'without a coalition it is out of the question'.⁸ Watson was jumping the gun here—Caucus had not at that stage discussed the implications of the election outcome at all.

Watson's disenchantment with the limitations his party had imposed on his freedom of action had much to do with his resignation in October 1907. He had offered to resign the leadership immediately after the 1905 Conference, appalled by its resolutions on alliances, electoral immunity and Caucus selection of ministers; stunned Caucus colleagues hastily placated him, assured him of their admiring support and appointed a Deputy Leader (Fisher) to lighten the administrative burden. Two years later, though, Watson could not be persuaded to reconsider. As well as those increasingly irksome restrictions, his decision was significantly influenced by ill health, the relentless strain and gruelling workload of the position—especially in that difficult parliamentary situation with no party having a majority—the perennial and uncongenial travel, and his wife's resentment of his absences.

Moreover, there was growing dissatisfaction within Caucus about Labor's tactical approach under Watson. Frazer and Ted Findley, a Victorian senator,

DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS OF CAUCUS

Australian Labor's early progress was remarkably rapid, faster than any equivalent party elsewhere in the world. Opponents tried to depict this new political phenomenon as alien and menacing. The denigration of Labor by hostile critics in Parliament and press included alarmist distortions of the very concept of Caucus itself.

The word 'caucus' merely signified a meeting of the parliamentary members of a political party. It had added significance in the context of the Labor Party because such meetings had unprecedented importance in that Party; the role and responsibilities of Caucus featured accordingly in Labor's own rules. By the time Chris Watson and his colleagues underlined their Party's unique progress by forming the world's first national Labor government, there was a concerted campaign underway to depict the 'Caucus Party' as unnatural. The word 'caucus', Nettie Palmer observed, 'was being bandied around as something new, mysterious, and sinister.'

One of the most flagrant examples came from a British visitor, C. E. Jacomb. He wrote a book, *God's Own Country* (1914), about his impressions of Australia and dedicated it to 'all English Public School and University Men, but especially to all Harrovians, past, present and future'. Jacomb managed to glean only the haziest notion of what Caucus really was, but this did not deter him from fearlessly exposing this insidious innovation to the penetrating scrutiny of his Harrow chums. His analysis was amusingly ignorant:

It is difficult to define the Caucus, as it is a secret body, whose membership list is jealously guarded from the public view. Nobody save the Labour politicians and Trades Hall officials know its real composition; but its policy is well known, and one can conjecture the rest. In all probability the Members of Labour Cabinets, if not all Labour Members



'THE NEW DYNASTY. KING CAUCUS THE FIRST'. Before and after the 1910 election, Punch magazine ran an anti-Labor campaign that deliberately misrepresented the role of Caucus. The caption read: 'Prime Minister Fisher.—"This, oh, sire, is what I purpose doing."; Autocratic King Caucus.—"Ah!—But this is what you must do."' (Punch, 3 May 1910; National Library of Australia)

holding seats in Parliament, belong to and take part in Caucus proceedings; and it is pretty certain that all the large Unions are represented as well. Be the details as they may, the organisation is one of enormous power, having succeeded in centralising all Labour interests in one comprehensive society. Not only does the Caucus dictate all Labour activities in Parliament, but it also engineers and fosters strikes, subsequently using its influence in Parliament to prevent legal consequences from overtaking the strikers.

Ross McMullin

were conspicuous among a Caucus ginger group (the first FPLP faction?) who wanted Watson to be more assertive; there were not enough concessions, they felt, in return for the consistent Caucus support. The culmination of their agitation came six months after Fisher succeeded Watson as FPLP Leader, when a parliamentary crisis imperilled the Deakin government. Fisher and Watson (who remained in Parliament until 1910) discussed the situation with Deakin, who proposed a Labor–Protectionist coalition. Eventually a Caucus majority warily agreed, on condition that Labor had most ministers and particular policy priorities were implemented. Watson (with Fisher’s blessing) fine-tuned negotiations with Deakin; as in 1905, the bearded pair knew an imminent Labor Federal Conference would probably take a dim view of what they were putting together. Once again it did. On 8 July 1908 Conference carried Findley’s strong motion opposing any alliance or electoral immunity; Watson, also a delegate at this Brisbane gathering, admitted that ‘the feeling of Conference was against alliances, and that must be respected’.⁹ (Caucus provided half the delegates, a higher proportion than at any other Federal Conference; their travel entitlements kept costs down.) Later that year, when Deakin’s unsatisfactory proposal in connection with a paramount FPLP concern (New Protection) left Caucus acutely disappointed, Frazer grasped the opportunity and moved that Labor should withdraw support from the government; his motion was carried, and Fisher soon became Labor’s second Prime Minister.

Watson had conceded on alliances, but fought a strong rearguard action on selection of ministers. The 1908 Conference had reaffirmed that it was a matter for Caucus, but Watson moved in Caucus on 12 November that the FPLP, ‘having every confidence in its Leader, leaves the selection of his colleagues in his hands’.¹⁰ A predictable amendment (moved by Findley, with Frazer seconding) upheld the Conference resolution, and was carried. Still determined that the Leader should have the ministers of his choice, Watson then played a crucial lobbying role in Caucus to ensure Fisher was given the ones he wanted. With Fisher and Senate Leader McGregor exempted from the ballot, Fisher produced a list of preferred aspirants—Pearce, Hughes, Batchelor, Tudor, Thomas and Mahon—and Watson used his still considerable influence to ensure Fisher ended up with them and Frazer, Findley and O’Malley (Darwin, Tas.) all missed out. The last spot went to Jim Hutchison, MHR for Hindmarsh since 1903. Tudor, having been Caucus Secretary since he succeeded Stewart in 1905, was replaced after his elevation to Cabinet by David Watkins (Newcastle, NSW), who remained Secretary until 1917.

The Fisher Government did not last long because the non-Labor parties hastily decided to sink their differences and merge. This fusion, as it became known, completed the first phase of federal politics. From now on, although minor parties of varying influence would come and go from time to time, it essentially boiled down to Labor versus the rest. Caucus would no longer have the assistance of progressive allies in attaining objectives in Parliament, but the fusion was a liberating development. As Spence wrote:

We have now reached the stage . . . when two parties face each other. On the one side there are the land monopolists, syndicators, money-grabbers, rings,

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The FPLP in 1910. In 1909 the anti-Labor parties buried their differences and formed the Fusion Party. It was of little avail as Labor won the election in April 1910, and formed the first government to hold a majority in both Houses. (National Library of Australia)

trusts, combines, and the whole body of exploiters of society . . . On the other side stands the people's party—those who work for the uplifting of the masses and the setting up of social justice.¹¹

Labor vigorously denounced the cynical fusion of these traditionally hostile parties, who had united to protect themselves against Labor's advance. There were masterpieces of devastating invective from Hughes; Caucus arranged for 50 000 copies to be printed.

The sequel was a stunning Labor triumph at the 1910 election. No party had managed a majority in either house since Federation, but Labor now had 41 of the 75 MHRs and 22 of the 36 senators. Anti-coalitionists like Frazer and Findley, who wished the FPLP had detached itself from the Protectionists much earlier, felt vindicated by this tremendous result, which confirmed that Australian Labor had progressed far ahead of all equivalent parties anywhere. Its evolution as a national entity was not quite finished: formation of a federal executive (to administer the Party nationally between Federal Conferences), although often discussed, was still five years away. But the success in 1910

certainly was emphatic. To Labor enthusiasts it was a breathtaking breakthrough, signifying widespread acceptance of their Party and its innovative procedures based on ideals of democracy and solidarity. Labor had developed policies attuned to national aspirations, and had created mechanisms to refine those policies when necessary. There was another precious ingredient:

a mystical element quite unknown to members of other political bodies . . . there was a crusading quality in the Labor Party that produced, at least in people of imagination, a sense of knight-errantry, of riding forth on a charger to right the wrongs of the world.¹²

No FPLP leader more epitomised the virtues of his Party's structure and procedures than Fisher. In 1909 a sudden alarm about the comparative naval strengths of Britain and Germany prompted hysterical demands from conservative politicians and newspapers that Australia must immediately finance the construction of a British battleship. The pressure was intense, but Fisher was unperturbed: Labor's policy was to create an Australian navy, not send money to England to strengthen theirs, and that was that.

Fisher's first (1908) Cabinet had included all Watson's 1904 ministers who were still available. In 1910, however, this was not the case. With ten ministers to select—eight in 1904, nine in 1908—Caucus decided that three had to be senators, and they were chosen first: McGregor, Pearce and Findley. In the first MHRs ballot Hughes, Batchelor and Tudor were approved by over half the Caucus and deemed elected; those with fewer than five votes were removed from contention, leaving nine to contest three vacancies. Rival tickets were organised by Thomas and Mahon. Thomas prevailed, being elected next, followed by O'Malley and Frazer. The elevation of idiosyncratic O'Malley perhaps owed much to the fact that Caucus colleagues owed much to him—he had reputedly lent some of them money. Also significant was the absence of Watson, whose influential lobbying had been instrumental in Findley, O'Malley and Frazer all missing out narrowly in 1908. The youngest ever federal minister, 30-year-old Frazer, had just managed to arrive from the West in time to press his claims by chartering a special boat to whisk him from the steamer to the wharf. Mahon was furious to find himself overlooked, and especially peeved by Frazer's inclusion; the Western Australian colleagues were no longer on speaking terms.

The new government proceeded to implement Labor's program with vim, enacting far more legislation than any previous federal Ministry. Its initiatives on land tax, extension of arbitration and substantially increased welfare were particularly welcomed by Labor activists. A high priority was defence, where Pearce presided over important developments. Frazer proved an energetic Postmaster-General, reducing charges, increasing efficiency, boosting morale among the staff, and introducing uniform postage with new national stamps featuring his own design—a kangaroo bounding across White Australia. The government also involved itself purposefully in a range of additional national responsibilities, including lighthouses, quarantine, copyright and uniform railway gauges. The economy was prospering too. Practically the only significant setback was the failure of the 1911 referendum seeking, in line with the FPLP Platform, enlarged powers for the national government.

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The third Fisher Ministry managed the nation's affairs from September 1914 until Fisher's retirement on 27 October 1915. (National Library of Australia)

These wide-ranging measures were sometimes reshaped by Caucus. When Labor backbenchers objected to legislation Hughes brought to Parliament relating to the establishment of Duntroon Military College, he became frustrated and rude; they voted for an amendment that was carried in the House of Representatives against the government. An emergency Caucus meeting, full of fireworks and straight talking, followed; Hughes eventually agreed to postpone any legislation if Caucus felt it should be reconsidered. Caucus also forced the government to insert a provision in the *Electoral Act* designed to counteract the growing press animosity Labor was experiencing. Suggestions of another Caucus 'showdown' concerning the creation of a Commonwealth Bank, with a Caucus 'torpedo brigade' coercing the government, appear to have more to do with retrospective distortions and exaggerations emanating characteristically from O'Malley than with what really occurred.

During the 1913 election campaign Fisher concentrated more on his government's proud record in office than on future initiatives, an emphasis that evidently contributed to Labor's surprising defeat. Also, it was perhaps risky to coincide the resubmitted referenda with the election, even with the innovation of printed arguments for and against the proposals distributed to the electorate. In the end the referenda and the election were both lost very narrowly. The outcome left Caucus in uncharted territory, its one seat deficit in the lower house counterbalanced by its large majority in the Senate. There was considerable debate in Caucus about tactics. Senator Rae (NSW) tried to persuade Caucus to direct his upper house colleagues not to deal with any government business at all (presumably including Supply Bills). Such extremist tactics were never likely to attain majority Caucus support, but the FPLP did respond vigorously to the government's obvious manoeuvring to engineer Australia's first double dissolution as soon as possible. When it was granted by the Governor-General, Caucus angrily disputed his decision: he was no mere cipher, not at

LABOR'S LOST LEADERS



Between 1909 and 1914 Labor's ranks were reduced by the premature death of several promising young parliamentarians. Left to right: Jack Arthur, Charlie Frazer, Ernest Roberts, Egerton Batchelor and Jim Hutchison. (National Library of Australia)

Jack Arthur was not in Cabinet long. Afflicted with a kidney illness, he died three months later, aged only 39. Rising from humble origins to achieve outstanding academic results and prominence as a leading barrister, Arthur had entered Federal Parliament by unseating a prominent anti-Labor identity who had held Bendigo since Federation. Talented and committed, Arthur in his short-lived political career more than lived up to the considerable expectations of Labor enthusiasts, who were convinced he was the most promising FPLP acquisition since Federation. He knew the severity of his illness and the consequences of driving himself for the cause, but was determined to die in harness.

A contemporary of Arthur's and another potential leader, Charlie Frazer, had died at an even younger age the previous year. In November 1913 Frazer spent an enjoyable Saturday at John Wren's Epsom racecourse, woke next morning with pneumonia and died two days later. Only 33, he had already achieved much and had plenty more to contribute; he was looking forward to leading his Party in due course.

So too was Ernest Alfred Roberts. Before becoming member for Adelaide in 1901, Roberts was a wharf labourer, sec-

retary of his union, the youngest member of the South Australian Legislative Assembly and an officer in two Boer War contingents. Radical and articulate, he was an incisive and vigorous debater and a minister in the second Fisher government. On 2 December 1913 Roberts was striding out of the parliamentary chamber after a characteristically spirited contribution when he collapsed from a fatal heart attack. He was 44.

Not only did Roberts die just a week after Frazer. Remarkably, Roberts had been promoted into the Ministry two years earlier because of the sudden death of a senior colleague who was also South Australian, also in his forties and also died of a heart attack. E. L. Batchelor was widely admired, especially by Watson, and his capacity, experience and influence were sorely missed.

Moreover, a few years earlier the contribution of another FPLP minister from South Australia had been suddenly cut short. Jim Hutchison, member for Hindmarsh since 1903, left a widow and six children bereft when he died unexpectedly in 1909 at the age of 50.

Ross McMullin

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Sitting in the House of Representatives for almost a quarter of a century, Frank Anstey was not only one of Labor's best orators but was also, at times, one of the party's most strident critics.
(Caucus Collection)

all bound to follow his ministers' advice and had perpetrated 'constitutional butchery', Hughes alleged.¹³

Caucus would have resisted even more resolutely if the ramifications of the 1914 election could have been foreseen. During the campaign an alarming international crisis suddenly developed. With Britain likely to become involved in a major war, Fisher, campaigning at Colac, made his famous declaration that if necessary Australia would assist Britain 'to our last man and last shilling'. Hughes, convinced this looming conflict would be a massive struggle that had to be won at all costs, tried to persuade Fisher that the election should be cancelled. Fisher was characteristically unmoved: 'I am absolutely in disagreement with your views,' he informed Hughes.¹⁴ The news that Britain had declared war arrived before polling day, and influenced the outcome: Labor's strong recent credentials on defence were instrumental in its victory. The FPLP regained a lower house majority and retained its strong Senate position with 31 of the 36 senators. Caucus provided Fisher with a Cabinet that was a mixture of experience (Hughes, Pearce, Tudor, Mahon) and several newcomers to the Ministry—talented barrister Jack Arthur (Bendigo, Vic.), portly publican Jens Jensen (Bass, Tas.), fluent debater Ted Russell (Senator, Vic.), hefty carpenter and former New South Wales rugby representative Albert Gardiner (Senator, NSW), experienced parliamentarian William Archibald (Hindmarsh, SA) and Spence, the veteran union leader.

So Australian Labor had to contend with a daunting challenge faced by no other labour or socialist party. Only in Australia did Labor have the fateful task of directing the nation's participation in a conflict far beyond anyone's expectation or experience. In that sense the Party became a victim of its remarkably rapid success.

Within Caucus there was ominous divergence on the war from the outset. Some agreed with Hughes that Australia had to do its utmost to help Britain to victory in every possible way; this gigantic conflict threatened everything, Labor's achievements included. Some conceded that a commitment to the

British cause might require abnormal authoritarian arrangements, but should not prevent further advancement towards the Party's objectives. Some were suspicious of the war as justification for initiatives abhorrent to Labor ideals as well as undermining Labor's Platform goals.

Frank Anstey (Bourke, Vic.), the most passionate Caucus sceptic, insisted in the House of Representatives that Labor should 'point out to the masses of the people that this war is the product and the outcome of the domination of trade and commerce, and the greed of wealth'.¹⁵ During a Caucus discussion of the government's proposed Budget, Anstey again became animated; when his diatribe about the Budget's shortcomings as a radical document left Fisher unmoved, Anstey stormed out, scattering a pile of books as he left.

Anstey was predictably steamed up about the wide-ranging *War Precautions Act*, and he was not alone. Hughes justified it as necessary 'to deal with unique circumstances which threaten our very existence', but Anstey vehemently disagreed: 'We are simply being swept away by one vast tide that is overwhelming our ideas of human rights and liberty.' There was typically quirky criticism from O'Malley: the legislation's 'godfather is Labour, but . . . its real father is a military, guilt-spurred rooster'. Hughes countered that Anstey had 'drowned his judgement in the sea of his emotions', and dismissed as ignorant O'Malley's assertion that the war was too far away to justify such legislation. 'The war is 12,000 miles away because every day we live thousands of men die horrible deaths and endure untold sufferings to keep it away,' he insisted. The passage of the legislation through Parliament on 29 April prompted Anstey to declare that he owed 'no allegiance after to-night to this government, or to the men I find associated with them'.¹⁶

Events at Gallipoli raised the emotional temperature even further. With Caucus increasingly divided, Fisher found the strain overwhelming and resigned in October. Caucus endorsed Hughes as his successor, not without foreboding in some quarters. His fanatical approach to the war, together with his abrasiveness, deviousness and chronic turbulence, made some colleagues nervous about entrusting the prime ministership to him, despite his obvious talents. He began as if he were intent on vindicating those concerns, abandoning well-advanced plans to resubmit the 1911 and 1913 referenda proposals to the electorate. Hughes further consolidated his reputation for untrustworthiness when the new Ministry was being formed. Having tried unsuccessfully to confine Cabinet changes to the election of a single new minister to replace Fisher, Hughes was appalled when the spill of all positions demanded by Caucus resulted in the return of O'Malley to Cabinet. Higgs and William Webster, the dogged MHR for Gwydir whose eleven-hour stonewalling effort in 1909 remains the longest speech in the Australian Parliament, became ministers for the first time, and Archibald and Spence were dropped. While Archibald reacted by publicly blasting O'Malley, who replied with interest, Hughes proceeded to alienate his Cabinet colleagues by attempting to orchestrate a hasty departmental restructure designed to maximise control for himself. The ministers objected to this manipulative trickery; Hughes had to abandon it, but Gardiner found the exercise so repugnant he almost refused to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

In 1916 Hughes travelled to England and visited Australian soldiers at the

TARRED AND FEATHERED

Close to O'Malley, and a vigorous Caucus advocate of the desirability of a Commonwealth Bank, was J. K. McDougall. A farmer and prolific writer of radical prose and poetry, McDougall won the rural Victorian seat of Wannon in 1906, despite being struck dumb with stage fright at his first campaign meeting. In Parliament he was also noted for speechlessness, being heard so rarely apart from question time that he was dubbed 'the silent member'. 'J. K.' was nevertheless an assiduous worker for his electorate, which was hardly a natural Labor seat, and his pen was never silent.

Principled, dedicated and widely admired, McDougall never wavered in his commitment to the Labor cause and was an uncompromising critic of those who did. He even refused to acknowledge his friend Fisher when he encountered the FPLP leader in frock coat and top hat. McDougall's daughter, Margaret Luers, explained in her biography, *Laureate of Labor* (1987), that he regarded 'those togs' as 'the livery of the enemy'. When parliamentary salaries were raised 'J. K.' refused to accept the increase. News of his marriage in 1908 at the age of 40 prompted delighted Caucus colleagues to pass the hat around for a wedding present; a tidy sum was subscribed, but McDougall felt it would be improper to accept the silver tea and coffee set they offered (and bought one for his wife from his own money instead).

Retaining Wannon in 1910, McDougall lost the seat in 1913 (like Jim Scullin in the neighbouring electorate of Corangamite) when a rural swing contributed to the narrow defeat of the Fisher Government. He contested several elections during the Great War, but was not a candidate in 1919 when Labor's opponents unscrupulously dredged up and distorted a satirical poem he had written during the Boer War as if it represented Labor's contemporary attitude to the

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J. K. McDougall, farmer, politician and writer, suffered the ignominy of being tarred and feathered by a group of returned soldiers. They were offended by the malicious interpretation McDougall's opponents placed on a poem he had written during the Boer War. (National Library of Australia)

Anzacs. This sordid electioneering culminated in a visit to McDougall's isolated farmhouse by a group of returned soldiers intent on retribution. 'J. K.' was lured outside, assaulted and kidnapped—leaving his wife and daughter frantic with worry—then tarred and feathered.

McDougall did not stand as a candidate again, but continued to provide sterling service to the Labor cause as a writer, poet and propagandist. Five volumes of his verse were published. A memorable character, he died in 1957, four months before his 90th birthday.

Ross McMullin



'THE FOUNDLING'

*The Liberals cry in chorus now: 'Well, here's a pretty find!
This squalling brat upon our step, by Caucus left behind.
His parents cast him forth in scorn; they now disown the kid,
And dropped him on our doorstep so of him to be well rid.
He's wanted not by Labor, and he's wanted not by us;
But p'raps we'd better take him in to save a public fuss.'
Thus Little Billee changes hands, while loudly he doth squall,
And Labor's outcast child becomes a Liberal, after all.
(With acknowledgements Melbourne **Truth**).*

(Labor Call, 30 November 1916; National Library of Australia)

Western Front. His emotional attachment to them and their cause, together with their appalling casualties in France—28 000 in seven weeks, including a former Caucus colleague Hughes caught up with during his trip, 45-year-old Bill Johnson (Robertson, NSW)—influenced his momentous conclusion that conscription had become necessary. There were obviously grave implications for Party unity. State Conferences in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria had pronounced emphatically against conscription, ruling that any Labor MPs supporting it would be deprived of endorsement (even though such advocates would not be explicitly contravening the Party Platform, which was silent on the issue). The FPLP was divided (Pearce and Webster were the only pro-conscription ministers besides Hughes), but it was clear enough that Caucus anti-conscriptionists had the numbers in the Senate for the Prime Minister to conclude he would be unable to get compulsion legislation through Parliament. In the end he decided on a referendum.

Many Caucus members felt in an awful predicament. All wondered how long the Party would take to recover from the damage such a divisive issue would inevitably inflict. Gardiner had ruefully predicted back in February that conscription would 'throw the party back five or perhaps ten years'.¹⁷ What was impossible to foresee, and what aggravated their dilemma, was the future course of the war, then careering along like an avalanche. Some MPs, who mistakenly presumed that inside information on military and strategic questions was available to their leaders, were impressed by the conscriptionist advocacy of seniors such as Hughes, Pearce and Watson who had been influential in the Party throughout its existence. Pressure from electorate branches, state executives or Labor colleagues was crucial. Having relatives in the trenches could

also be significant. As Caucus members grappled with this agonising decision, they were acutely aware that the Party was being plunged into the biggest crisis of its existence, which was likely to rupture longstanding friendships of even the closest comrades.

Just as Caucus pessimists feared, Labor proceeded to tear itself apart. Hughes was unable to persuade the Victorian or New South Wales state executives to change their minds, and Caucus debate raged on and off for four days before he emerged at 2 am on 29 August with narrow majority support for holding the referendum. Caucus turmoil was publicly exposed when the Military Service Referendum Bill came before Parliament, a development prompting Tudor to resign from the Ministry. Lawyer Frank Brennan (Batman, Vic.), an avowed anti-conscriptionist, accused Hughes of 'driving the country to disaster, chaos, confusion, loss, and, probably, bloodshed'.¹⁸ Most Caucus members ended up in favour of submitting the referendum to the people; Parliament passed the Bill, and the campaign began.

It was, as Hughes observed, 'the most severe and bitter Australia has ever known',¹⁹ with huge crowds, unprecedented passion and disconcerting violence. The strident language he himself used to assail anti-conscriptionists (who included, of course, Caucus colleagues) did much to intensify the bitterness and Labor's trauma. After all the storm and tempest, all the drama and controversy, the referendum was rejected and the Labor Party was in ruins. Even Hughes felt remorse as he surveyed the wreckage: 'I look around today . . . and see the Party to which I have devoted my life hopelessly, irrevocably divided.'²⁰ One of his ministers, Russell, was similarly reflective. 'Things can never be again as they were in Australia,' he concluded. 'Everything must be recast.'²¹

At the next Caucus meeting on 14 November, a group of MPs was clearly intent on removing Hughes, who responded by leading his supporters out of the Caucus room and forming a new Ministry from among these 'National Labor' defectors. The schism was confirmed in December, when a special Federal Conference carried Scullin's motion insisting on the expulsion of all Caucus members who had either supported conscription or left the FLP and formed another party. With its calamitous rupture complete, Labor ended 1916 in devastated disarray. The road back proved long and hard, longer even than Gardiner's worst-case ten-year prediction. His party paid a heavy price for being in office in 1914. The days of Australian Labor leading the world were over.

BACK FROM THE BRINK: 1917–29

Bobbie Oliver

The years 1917 to 1929 were among the bleakest in the history of the Caucus. In the 1917 election, Labor was reduced to 34 members—12 in the Senate and 22 in the House of Representatives. Of these, three-quarters were from New South Wales and Victoria, whereas between 1901 and 1917 almost half of the Caucus had come from the other four states. Neither Western Australia nor Tasmania returned any Labor representatives in 1917. Tasmania was without Labor representation between July 1920 and December 1922, when two ALP members were elected.¹ Ted Needham, Western Australia's sole remaining ALP Senator out of six prior to the Party split, was defeated in 1919. This left Albert 'Jupp' Gardiner as Labor's only representative in the Senate between 1920 and 1922. From 1922 until he lost the 1926 election, Gardiner was Leader in the Senate and Deputy Leader of the FPLP.²

Frank Tudor, W. M. Hughes' successor as Labor Leader, had represented the seat of Yarra since the first federal election in 1901. He had held Cabinet portfolios in the Fisher and Hughes administrations yet, despite his considerable experience, was not an inspiring Party Leader or an effective Leader of the Opposition.³ Apart from the devastation caused by the Labor split and the losses sustained in the 1917 election, Tudor bore the brunt of the second campaign against military conscription, when he and other Labor members 'endured the taunts, the accusing finger of disloyalty, the malicious newspaper reports and comments' of pro-conscriptionists.⁴ In the referendum of 20 December 1917, the Australian people again voted against Hughes' proposals for sending conscripted men to reinforce the AIF in France; the small anti-conscription majority

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*From 1901 until 1927
Federal Parliament sat in
the Victorian Parliament
Building. The final sitting
was on 24 March 1927.
(Collingridge Collection,
National Library of
Australia)*

even increased. Paradoxically, the people voted for Hughes' so-called 'Win The War' Party but against his preferred strategy for winning the war.

Despite his anti-conscriptionist stance being vindicated in two referenda, Tudor's leadership was never secure. In October 1919, at a special Party conference, supporters of the Queensland Labor Premier, T. J. Ryan, raised the possibility of Ryan transferring to federal politics. Support came principally from the New South Wales branch, and in particular from James Catts (Cook, NSW), who was Caucus secretary. Catts persuaded New South Wales and Tasmania to support Ryan. Despite opposition from the Victorian executive, which saw the move as an insult to Tudor, a Special Federal Conference in October 1919 endorsed Ryan's move to a federal seat and appointed him Campaign Director of the federal election held in December of that year. As Party Leader, Tudor would normally have held this position. The press emphasised the slight, causing Tudor further distress. National Party propaganda sidelined Tudor and turned the election into a contest between Hughes and Ryan, declaring 'Ryan spells Ruin' and linking him with 'Rome' and 'Bolshevism'.⁵ Despite the propaganda value that the Nationalists drew from Ryan's entry to federal politics, the ALP, still reeling from the devastation of the conscription split, regarded the past Premier of Queensland as its brightest hope of leading Labor back to government. As expected, Ryan won the seat of West Sydney. He quickly became one of the FPLP's most able parliamentary performers, and was elected Acting Leader in September 1920 over the previous Deputy, Matthew Charlton (Hunter, NSW) when Tudor was absent with a heart condition.⁶

Not everyone agreed that Ryan was a bonus for the federal Party. In March 1921, Catts was defeated in the ballot for Caucus secretary by Arthur Blakeley (Darling, NSW). Blakeley was President of the powerful Australian Workers' Union (AWU). Catts created controversy when he told the Sydney press that he had been defeated because of his support for Ryan. The AWU, he said, believed that Ryan's entry to federal politics had lost the Party seats. On 28 April, Caucus



'CHAMPIONS OF THE CAUSE OF THE WORKING CLASS'. T. J. Ryan's appointment as Campaign Director in October 1919 was portrayed by the popular press as a slight to leader Frank Tudor. This advertisement sought to present a more unified, cooperative image. (Australian Worker, 6 November 1919; National Library of Australia)

members discussed at length a resolution asking Catts to explain his statement. Thomas Lavelle (Calare, NSW) and Senator Gardiner moved that Caucus consider Catts' explanation unsatisfactory, but this was rejected in favour of an amendment by James Page and Norman Makin (Hindmarsh, SA) that the matter be adjourned for discussion at a later date. It does not appear to have been discussed further.⁷

Besides losing members in the electoral defeats of 1917 and 1919, the Party's difficulties were increased by the departure of several talented and politically experienced members. In October 1920, Hugh Mahon (Kalgoorlie, WA) was expelled from the House of Representatives for expressing anti-British sentiments.⁸ He was defeated in the ensuing by-election. Within the next few months, several Labor members died, including both its Leader and Deputy Leader. Page, a foundation member of the federal Parliament, died on 3 June 1921. The FPLP gathered to mourn his death as a 'great loss', and spent eleven guineas on an impressive, 'permanent' wreath for his grave. Ryan travelled to Queensland to support the Labor candidate, W. J. Dunstan, in the July by-election. Since moving to federal politics, Ryan had not enjoyed good health. In the draughty Parliament House in Melbourne he suffered continual bouts of bronchitis and influenza. Illness, constant travelling and his heavy workload wore him out. Despite the advice of friends, Ryan undertook a number of speaking engagements in Maranoa, pressing on even after he began coughing up blood. On the night before the election, he was taken to hospital with pneumonia and died on 1 August, aged 45 years. Adding to the tragedy of the death of two members in short succession, the ALP lost Maranoa to the Country Party. Meanwhile, Tudor had been ill since April. He suffered a further heart attack and died on 10 January 1922.⁹

Four FPLP members were expelled from the Party. In 1920, the Queensland Executive expelled William Higgs, the Member for Capricornia, for supporting the 1919 referendum on federal powers that had been conducted in conjunction with the election that year. The New South Wales branch expelled Catts in 1922

THE EXPULSION OF HUGH MAHON

Hugh Mahon, the Member for Kalgoorlie (WA), strongly believed that his native Ireland should be freed from British rule. In October 1920, he was outraged by the death of an Irish nationalist in a prison in England. At a meeting of Irish patriots in Melbourne, Mahon railed against the 'bloody and accursed Empire' that had sent 'spies, informers and bloody cut-throats' to Ireland. His speech was reported extensively and widely condemned. The Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, accused Mahon of disloyalty. The Melbourne *Argus* (12 November 1920) reported his claim that 'but for the soldiers and sailors of Britain whom [Mahon] calls cut-throats and murderers, this country would have now been a German colony'. In the House of Representatives on 11 November, Hughes moved a resolution to have Mahon expelled from Parliament for making seditious utterances inconsistent with a parliamentarian's oath of allegiance. Labor colleagues strongly opposed the resolution, especially Frank Anstey, who argued that the law courts—rather than Parliament—were the place to pass judgment on Mahon's conduct. The vote was 34 to 17 in favour of expulsion.

The feisty Mahon claimed that he would frame the motion and put it in a conspicuous place in his home, along with a warrant signed by 'Buckshot' Forster consigning him to Kilmainham Prison 40 years earlier. On 18 November a Melbourne publication, the *Tribune*, carried his statement that: 'If anyone thinks I regard [expulsion] as an indignity, he quite misunderstands my feelings. The indignity surely attaches to the garrotter, not his victim.'

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In October 1920, despite a staunch defence from his Labor colleagues, Hugh Mahon, the Irish-born Member for Kalgoorlie, became the first and only politician to be expelled from federal Parliament. (National Library of Australia)

The expulsion necessitated a by-election in December, which Mahon fought with the assistance of the Western Australian State Executive. Mahon lost to George Foley, an ex-ALP member who now represented the National Coalition. But Foley's winning margin was only 443 out of 16 321 votes cast. Mahon did not stand for Parliament again. He remains to this day the only Member ever to have been expelled from the federal Parliament.

Bobbie Oliver

because he accused the State Executive of corruption, especially in the conduct of preselection ballots, and the Federal Executive endorsed his expulsion.¹⁰

Catts' accusation laid bare the unhealthy state of Labor in New South Wales, which had not previously spilled into the federal sphere. The Tasmanian executive expelled Senator James Ogden after he had supported the Bruce–Page government's Navigation and Immigration Bills in 1925. Ogden claimed that

the militant Seamen's Union was harming Tasmania commercially by enforcing a protracted strike. In 1928, William Lambert (Ryan's successor in the seat of West Sydney) also became a victim of the factional struggle in New South Wales.¹¹ In each case, the FPLP appears to have endorsed the expulsion, although sometimes reluctantly.

Tudor's successor as Party Leader was Matthew Charlton. A miner from Newcastle, he had served in the New South Wales Parliament from 1903 until 1909 and then entered federal politics in 1910. In the ballot for Party Leader on 16 May 1922, Charlton was elected by 12 votes to 2 in preference to Senator Gardiner, who became his Deputy. Six Caucus members were absent from this meeting.¹² Like Tudor, Charlton lacked the charismatic qualities necessary for strong and successful leadership during this difficult period in Opposition.

In assessing his skills and contribution as leader, Charlton's colleagues have generally been kinder than historians. According to Makin:

It is true to say that he contributed substantially to re-establishing the Australian Labor Party, for it was in the year following the resignation of Mr Charlton from the leadership that Labor was called upon to govern. Much of the preparation of public mind could be attributed to Matthew Charlton.¹³

Ben Chifley, who entered Parliament in 1928, the year that Charlton resigned, commented that he carried out the difficult task of leading Labor 'with dignity and distinction' at a time when the Party 'had to face overwhelming numbers in the Commonwealth Parliament'.¹⁴ The ALP's historian, Ross McMullin, on the other hand, has observed that while federal Labor was 'in eclipse', the Party held office in several of the states; he suggested that this was 'partly attributable to leadership: Theodore, Gunn, Collier and Lyons were all more effective leaders than Charlton'.¹⁵

Again like Tudor, Charlton was disadvantaged by the entry of a popular Queensland politician into federal politics—in this case it was E. G. Theodore, who gained the New South Wales seat of Dalley in 1927 after W. G. Mahony had been persuaded to step aside for him. Charlton felt threatened by the presence of this powerful, charismatic politician. Several other Caucus members objected to the method by which a federal seat had been secured for Theodore—Lambert was reported in the press as alleging that Mahony had been bribed to resign from Parliament, after James Mathews (Melbourne Ports, Vic.), Percy Coleman (Reid, NSW) and Frank Anstey had been approached without success. A royal commission, appointed by the Nationalist Prime Minister Stanley Bruce to investigate the allegation, found that Mahony had been bribed, but did not implicate Theodore. Anstey, meanwhile, resigned as Assistant Leader in the House of Representatives in protest over Theodore's entry to the FPLP—a move which he saw as undermining Charlton—but others came out strongly in support of the Queenslander. Charlton resigned in 1928, aged 62, and was succeeded by James Scullin. In the ballot for Deputy, Blakeley defeated Theodore by one vote.¹⁶ After the ballot, Charlie McGrath (Ballarat, Vic.) was so upset by the result that he spoke to the Melbourne *Argus*, and his complaints were published on 1 May 1928. McGrath claimed that the result was engineered by Charlton and Blakeley, who had first invited Theodore to the front bench

DROPPING THE PILOT



'DROPPING THE PILOT'. The election of 'Red Ted' Theodore to the NSW seat of Dalley put further pressure on Matthew Charlton's beleaguered position as FPLP leader. The caption read: 'MAT: "Wish you luck, Ted; though it's not so much a new driver the team wants as a new waggon."' (Bulletin, 27 January 1927; National Library of Australia)

Matthew Charlton resigned from the leadership of the federal ALP at a special meeting of Caucus on 29 March 1928. The reason he gave—ill health—was a symptom rather than the cause. Charlton's health had undoubtedly deteriorated as a result of strain brought on by his uncomfortable situation in the Party. He had been under increasing pressure from the state branches to resign and enable the FPLP to elect a new leader. Many in Caucus supposed that E. G. Theodore would succeed him. Charlton disliked this situation and was embarrassed by it. Other Caucus members, too, were unhappy with Theodore's swift elevation to the frontbench, notably Frank Anstey who resigned as Assistant

Leader. According to Ross McMullin in *The Light on the Hill*, Anstey admitted 'privately' that the 'undermining' of Charlton disgusted him.

Charlton was replaced, not by Theodore, but by James Scullin. Theodore did not succeed even in gaining the Deputy's position, losing by one vote to Arthur Blakeley. Scullin went on to become Prime Minister, Theodore's brief federal parliamentary career was dogged by scandal, and Charlton retired and took up bowling. He was elected president of his club at Lambton and was sufficiently skilled to tour with an interstate team.

Bobbie Oliver

and then wished to humiliate him by not offering him the deputy leadership. At a Caucus meeting on 4 May, McGrath was required to make a statement concerning his behaviour. Charlton accepted his apology.¹⁷

The new Leader, James Scullin, had succeeded Tudor as Member for Yarra. A devout Catholic, he was born at Trawalla, Victoria, in 1876. A grocer by trade, he held the seat of Corangamite from 1910 until 1913. Scullin had a reputation as an eloquent orator. He had opposed conscription for military service overseas, and at the special Federal Conference on conscription in Melbourne in 1916 he moved the crucial resolution demanding the expulsion of all FPLP members who had either supported conscription or joined another party.¹⁸

Party leadership changed in the Senate, too. One of Labor's gains in the 1925 election was the return of Western Australian Senator Edward Needham. Needham served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate during 1925–26 and then was elected Leader from 1 July 1926. Unlike his predecessor, Gardiner, Needham did not become Deputy Leader of the FPLP. During this period, there were only five Labor senators. They were constantly frustrated in their attempts to amend some of the most anti-union legislation in Australian history. The Nationalist Party had lost its House of Representatives majority in the 1922 federal election and in order to retain government was forced to form a coalition with the Country Party, led by Earle Page. The Country Party insisted that Hughes be replaced as Prime Minister. Hughes' successor, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, came from a wealthy family—he had been educated at Melbourne Grammar School and Cambridge. Bruce had entered Parliament after being persuaded that it was his duty to protect his country 'against the Bolshevik menace'.¹⁹ In June 1924, the government appointed a board of seven directors to manage the Commonwealth Bank, which had previously been under government control. The board consisted of six employers drawn from agriculture, commerce, finance and industry, and the secretary to the Treasury. The ALP protested that the appointment of employers as directors would make the people's bank into another capitalist bank. Labor's attempts to appoint to the board financial experts from among the Bank's employees and union representatives failed.²⁰

Bruce's economic policy was based on the slogan 'men, money and markets'. The government supported British emigration programs to increase Australia's population, and sought overseas capital to develop industries and markets for Australian products.²¹ In addition to measures designed to foster business, the Bruce–Page government introduced oppressive industrial legislation designed to curb unions. To his everlasting discredit in Labor eyes, Senator George Pearce—the last of the 1917 Labor 'rats' to retain a Cabinet post—supported these measures against his former class.

The 1925 federal election was the first at which voting was compulsory. Labor might have expected to improve upon its 1922 performance at the polls but actually lost seats as a result of a well-organised 'scare' campaign. The Nationalists accused the ALP of 'disloyalty' and 'Bolshevism', linking the Party with several aggressive strikes, such as those by British and Australian seamen that paralysed Australian ports in 1924 and 1925.²² Once returned to government, Bruce and his Attorney-General, John Latham, attempted to outlaw strikes

and succeeded in establishing a series of federal industrial awards that overrode state awards. As a reaction to the Maritime Strike, which crippled Australian shipping throughout much of 1925, the federal government introduced a new Crimes Bill. The Bill would reintroduce the provisions of the wartime Unlawful Associations legislation, and could be applied to any organisation accused of inciting people to violence or disaffection. A Caucus meeting on 4 February 1926 devoted several hours to discussing the proposed legislation. David Watkins and McGrath moved that the Party vote against the second reading of the Bill. Coleman and Makin moved an amendment that the Bill be withdrawn and redrafted to eliminate 'the drastic clauses aimed at Trades Unionism'. The meeting adjourned until the following day when discussion occupied members from 10 am until lunchtime. In the afternoon, the Coleman and Makin amendment was put and carried unanimously; then the original motion was reintroduced and carried. At the next meeting, on 11 February, further discussion occurred, this time on the clauses proposing that non-Australian-born unionists who breached the law could be deported.²³

In Parliament, Charlton moved a motion to withdraw the Bill and redraft it by omitting the clauses referring to industrial disputes. Associating such clauses with the *Crimes Act*, in Charlton's opinion, was 'an unwarranted affront to the great bodies of organised labour'. Supporting Charlton's motion, Edward Riley (South Sydney, NSW) said that Labor members were prepared to support those parts of the Bill that dealt with 'the criminal classes [who were] out to overturn society by forcible revolution' but not the second part dealing with 'the industrial class'. On 19 February, the Bill was sent to the upper house without amendment by 29 votes to 18. It was returned unamended on 12 March and became law shortly afterwards.²⁴

In May 1926 the Bruce–Page Government introduced further controversial legislation, which required a referendum in order to alter the Constitution. The proposed *Constitution Alteration (Industry and Commerce) Act* would grant the Commonwealth Parliament control over industrial conditions and powers, corporations, trusts, combines, trade unions and employers' and employees' associations. Furthermore, the legislation would enable the government to establish a tribunal to 'lay down the basic conditions of Australian industry, decide appeals, and generally act as the coordinating and harmonising authority in industrial affairs'.²⁵ The proposed *Constitution Alteration (Essential Services) Act* would grant the Commonwealth Parliament the power to 'protect the interests of the public in case of actual or probable interruption of any essential services'.²⁶ Most of the states had Labor governments and these rightly saw Bruce's tactics not so much as an assault on states' rights as an all-out attack on the Labor movement.

When the issue was discussed in Caucus in May 1926, Labor members were divided. The Party Platform supported the centralisation of powers, and the Party had sought these industrial powers in the referenda of 1911 and 1913. Caucus conservatives such as James Scullin and Charlton campaigned in favour of the proposals. Scullin argued that 'The industrial powers sought by the [Bruce] Ministry are all that is required for practical purposes, and one would have to be a traitor to all that he has fought for in the past to oppose them'.²⁷

But others in Caucus, such as William Mahony, feared that such an Act would grant the government powers ‘to pass legislation authorising them to do literally anything, seize property, close on funds, impose any penalties, including deportation, sentence of death or imprisonment for life’.²⁸ As for the ‘impartial tribunal’, the critics believed it would consist of judges appointed for life, and armed with full judicial powers that could not be overturned by state or federal governments.²⁹ Delegations of Caucus members attended meetings of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council and the New South Wales Labor Executive to discuss the referendum proposals.³⁰

Some federal members, including Charlton and FPLP Secretary Arthur Blakeley, contravened the ruling of their own state executives in supporting the proposals. Charlton negotiated with Bruce to have the Constitutional Amendment Bill altered to provide some federal power over corporations. On 8 June, Scullin and Needham succeeded in having a motion passed rescinding an earlier Caucus resolution calling for the withdrawal and redrafting of the Essential Services Bill. It appears that Charlton and other FPLP members supported Bruce’s proposed legislation because they believed that it was consistent with previous Labor proposals and with the ALP Platform.³¹ The Bill was debated in the House of Representatives in June 1926 and passed by a vote of 39 to 19. The Senate majority in favour of the Bill was more than 3 to 1. However, on polling day, 4 September 1926, the Australian people voted against both proposals.³²

With the failure of the referendum, the Bruce–Page Government turned to a new strategy. Under an amended federal Arbitration Act, politically conservative Federal Arbitration Court judges began bringing down awards overriding state awards and imposing stricter conditions relating to strikes and working hours. Justice Beeby’s Federal Engineers’ Award, of July 1927, permitted individual bargaining between employer and employee. Under Beeby’s ruling, state arbitration courts were given the power to enforce federal awards. Beeby’s 1928 Waterside Workers Award revoked many hard-won privileges. It doubled the length of time that a man might wait to receive work at the daily pick-up, and enabled employers to dispense with ‘smoko’ breaks and to insist on employees working during meal hours under the justification of pressure of work. When accepting an engagement, an employee would have to agree to continue working on a ship as long as his services were required. Wharfies, recalling the 70- to 80-hour shifts of the past, were particularly anxious to maintain the maximum twelve-and-a-half hour shift. Long shifts were made more certain by the provision that workers could ‘transfer’ from one ship to another, provided the vessels were owned by the same employer. The union resisted the new award with stoppages in many ports that lasted into 1929, but was defeated.³³

Endemic conflict in the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party also had a major impact on the FPLP in this period. Throughout the 1920s the New South Wales branch was racked by bitter factional fights, initially between pro- and anti-AWU groups, for control of the State Executive. From 1925 the situation was complicated by the emergence of a new faction led by Labor Premier J. T. Lang. Members of the federal Caucus were caught up in these struggles. Catts’ expulsion in 1922 was an early example, and so too was the arrival of William Henry Lambert as Ryan’s successor in the seat of West Sydney.

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Jim Scullin (right) and his deputy Arthur Blakeley led the party in the 1928 election that saw the Bruce–Page Government returned with a reduced majority. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives of Australia)

Lambert, an ex-shearer and AWU branch secretary, was a powerbroker in the state party and an enemy of the so-called ‘Trades Hall Reds’ led by Jock Garden. Like Catts, Lambert incurred the displeasure of the State Executive. Both Charlton and Blakeley flouted the New South Wales branch’s directive to campaign against the 1926 referenda proposals, but no action was taken although there was pressure for their expulsion.³⁴ This may have been partly because the state branch was so divided. A special conference in November 1926, dominated by an alliance of Lang supporters and Garden’s ‘Trades Hall Reds’, confirmed Lang as Leader and endorsed new rules that, it was claimed, would ‘provide a more representative and decentralised system’. The opponents denounced them as ‘Red Rules’ that would enable Communists to gain easier access to the Party.³⁵

In the November 1928 federal election, the Bruce–Page Government was returned with a reduced majority. Two of the successful Labor newcomers—who would one day serve as Prime Ministers of Australia—were John Curtin (Fremantle, WA) and Joseph Benedict Chifley (Macquarie, NSW). The Eleventh Parliament was the first to meet in the new Parliament House in Canberra, which had been opened by the Duke and Duchess of York in May 1927. Canberra was not a popular site with parliamentarians from either side of Parliament. It was isolated, cold and windy, with inadequate housing and other facilities. Labor moved from a Caucus room that the Party had occupied in Melbourne, whether in government or opposition, to an Opposition Room that it would vacate upon entering government.

Once the new parliamentary term commenced in 1929, the ALP tried to prevent an amendment of the *Transport Workers Act*. The amendment would enable the government to enforce a licensing system for workers who serviced interstate and overseas ships. The wharfies had their own name for it—the ‘Dog Collar Act’—but despite their scorn, the legislation proved effective in quelling resistance and forcing the union to accept what work was available. Curtin argued that Commonwealth laws should apply without discrimination, whereas the proposed Act discriminated against a small section of the workforce—that is, it required the licensing of waterside workers in certain ports. He denounced the use of criminal sanctions:

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Following Labor's 1929 election victory, Jim Scullin travelled by train from Melbourne to Canberra and was met by crowds of well-wishers at each stop. The new Prime Minister and his wife were greeted in Canberra by a jubilant crowd that included Labor colleagues Ted Theodore and Rowley James. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives of Australia)

Many offences are described as crimes though they are really acts done in the struggle for liberty. The alleged crime is often no more serious than the banding together of citizens for the advancement of their common interests . . . [To] describe as a criminal a man who, driven by his sense of manhood, and of what is due to him refuses to work even under the award of the [Arbitration] Court, is a gross misuse of language.³⁶

Later in the debate, Curtin warned that the proposed Bill would enable Parliament to exercise 'an authority in the sphere of industry which was not contemplated in the Constitution' nor in any of the amendments since. He foresaw that employers might find that 'this instrument', which they had seized upon as 'a means of oppressing the waterside workers', had become 'a two-edged sword'.

The increasing industrial turbulence created a political crisis. A lengthy lockout on the northern coalfield of New South Wales, and the government's preferential treatment of one of the wealthiest mine owners, John Brown, led to its downfall. With both workers and employers antagonised by its tactics in the Arbitration Court, the government decided to hand arbitration back to the states. Not all employers welcomed the proposal, and Billy Hughes seized the opportunity to exact revenge on the man who had supplanted him as Prime Minister. He persuaded several government members to join him and cross the floor of the House of Representatives.

Bruce called an early election, but was routed as Labor captured fifteen seats; never before had the FPLP been so dominant in the House of Representatives. Not only were the Nationalists defeated, but Bruce also lost his own seat to Melbourne Trades Hall Secretary, E. J. Holloway (Flinders, Vic).³⁷ Thousands of well-wishers farewelled Jim Scullin when he caught the train from Melbourne. Hundreds greeted him when he arrived in Canberra, where a band played 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'. The Labor members who gathered in the Hotel Kurrajong sang 'The Red Flag' in celebration of their epic victory after more than a decade in the wilderness.

SWEET REVENGE

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'FROM ALL OVER AUSTRALIA CAME A STREAM OF FIGURES—endless lines and columns of figures, which individually or in small groups meant little. But, in the sum total, they recorded the devastating defeat of the government. Here is the receiving room in the Post Office, Elizabeth Street, as it appeared when excitement rose to fever heat on Saturday. The rising tide of Labor victories is showing on the notice-boards, where progress figures in election vote counting were posted moment by moment. Inset: Mr. J. H. Scullin, Leader of the Opposition, eagerly noted the swing of popular favour as he received the election news by telephone in his home.' These gains included the seat of Flinders taken from Prime Minister Bruce by Trades Hall Secretary, Ted Holloway. (Sun News-Pictorial, 14 October 1929; National Library of Australia)

E. J. 'Ted' Holloway holds a unique place in Australian political history as the only candidate to have defeated a Prime Minister in his own seat. In 1929, he won the Victorian seat of Flinders from Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce. He was later a minister in the Curtin and Chifley Governments. In his unpublished autobiography, 'From Labour Council to Privy

Council', Holloway reflected on his first and most famous election victory:

The campaign in Flinders was strenuous in the extreme. The electorate itself was fairly extensive, partly rural and partly verging onto Melbourne's outer suburbs and holiday resorts—as I have already indicated, it was anything but a Labour seat. But many of its

electors were on this occasion aroused by the growing unemployment and the Government's industrial, financial and fiscal policies. The Labour supporters worked hard for me and there were not wanting a stream of speakers, from the leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the leaders of Australian trade unionism, to see that no elector of Flinders had any excuse for ignorance of the issues. The response to Labour's appeal all over Australia rose steadily and as the campaign came to a climax even we in Flinders could feel such a surge that we began to have hopes of which we hardly dared to speak, that we might surprise the Prime Minister himself.

The issue in Flinders was obscured, however, by the presence of a third candidate, an independent. He had advised his supporters to give their second preference to me rather than to the Prime Minister, but there was no

assurance that they would do so (in any event some did not). When, after two or three days, all the votes (including postal votes) were in and counted, I had the tiniest lead of 60 over the Prime Minister of first preference votes in a poll of 63,000. But the independent candidate had a couple of thousand votes and everything depended on his preferences. Finally the time for their allocation came. I received the majority of them and word was all over Australia that the Prime Minister had been defeated by the Secretary of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council by 305 votes. He had pulled his safe seat from under himself by the wilfulness and overbearing class bias of his policies. I was fully conscious that the Flinders vote was a vote *against* Bruce and *for* Labour: E. J. Holloway just happened to have been the man endorsed by Labour.

The years from 1917 to 1929 thus presented considerable challenges and changes. After the 1916 split, the Party had to surmount losses of significant members and many threats to unity. Instability was a significant characteristic, not only because of leadership changes, but also because few Labor members of either house could be certain of holding their seats. The search for a strong, gifted orator with the capacity to lead the ALP back into office appeared to end with Scullin's election in 1928, but Theodore was still in the background. A further, unresolved problem was the control that the state branches continued to exercise over the careers and actions of their federal members. It was the Party's great misfortune that its most powerful state branch should be involved in a bitter power struggle during one of the most challenging decades of the ALP's history.

THE GROWTH OF FEDERAL AUTHORITY: 1929–40

Terry Irving

These were the powers of Caucus, real and potential, at the end of the 1930s: it was the body that elected the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Party. It was run by an executive on which the Leader and his Deputy were in a minority. It elected the members of the Cabinet, or distributed responsibility for policy-making to its members when the Party was in Opposition. To it, the Leader brought his campaign speeches, press releases and thoughts on parliamentary tactics for approval. It looked forward to vetting government policy once Labor won the next election. Yet in this decade the history of the FPLP was a series of disasters. To the delight of the conservative press, it had humiliated a Labor Prime Minister, Acting Prime Minister and Acting Treasurer by adopting policies they could not agree to. It had split twice in 1931, the effect of which was to bring down the Labor government. After the consequent election, it was faced with a rival Labor grouping in the Parliament for four years. In these lean years, its proceedings continued to be disturbed by the shenanigans of the state branches, three of which expelled members of Caucus from the Party. In 1935 it elected a new leader, a future Prime Minister, by a majority of just one vote. So it might seem surprising that Caucus operated on the same principles at the end of this decade of turmoil as it had at the beginning. What is this stubborn thing called ‘Labor democracy’?

One part of the answer lies in Labor’s deep, foundational support for the culture of parliamentarism.¹ This means, of course, that the fortunes of the Party are tied to the moods of the electorate. In the 1930s, dramatic swings of electoral sentiment were reflected in the changing size of the Caucus. After

Labor's convincing win in the 1929 elections a Caucus of 54, the largest since the halcyon days of Fisher and Hughes, assembled to choose a new Labor government and Prime Minister, James Scullin. The splits of 1931 reduced the numbers by thirteen, but the voters at the end of that year were more punishing. The Caucus that met in 1932 had just 23 members,² and although Labor won seats in the House in the election of 1934, this was offset by its dismal result for the Senate. In fact Caucus remained at 23, the lowest point in its history, until the Langite group of nine rejoined the Party in 1936. By this time the new Party Leader, John Curtin, was determined to take advantage of a more favourable situation. Caucus also responded to the new possibilities. Its membership increased to 45 after the 1937 elections when Labor made strong gains in the Senate. Meetings had fuller agendas and soon members' speeches had to be limited to five minutes.³ With a restored sense of its identity, Caucus complained about the lack of suitable accommodation in Parliament House for the Party, and in the hotels of Canberra for its members.⁴ Assisted by the growing strength of federal authority in the ALP, Caucus was poised by the end of the decade to take on again the responsibilities of national leadership. It was ready to show the electorate that Labor could govern, and in the 1940 elections that almost came to pass.

The other part of the answer (less easily understood today) lies in the culture of Labor's 'novel theory of democracy'. This was the term used by Gordon Childe in 1923 to describe the mechanisms of pledge, conference and caucus that made Labor politicians primarily representatives of their movement rather than their constituencies.⁵ As a theory of representation it was utterly abhorrent to conservatives, but it was also a source of conflict for Labor, especially when the Party had to decide as a government whether movement or nation had priority. The Scullin government's troubles can be traced back to this dilemma. Other conflicts also stemmed from Labor's adherence to this form of democracy. A federal party was bound to feel conflicts, between state branches and the Federal Conference and Executive, which were fought out within the Caucus. The disruption caused by the followers of Jack Lang, whose power derived from control of the New South Wales branch, was just the most spectacular example. Again, structural tensions within the movement, such as those between trade union affiliates and individual members, were reflected in the difference between parliamentarians who had been union officials and those who had not. To some extent the breakaway of the Lyons group can be understood in this way. Further, there were differences within the trade unions, derived from labour market position, between the Australian Workers Union (AWU), the craft unions and the 'industrialists'. Overlaying all these structural differences was the struggle of ideas, specifically how to understand the Party's socialist objective of 1921. In the Caucus of the 1930s, Ben Chifley and Curtin tried to make socialism a practical question, but even they were sometimes tempted by the moralistic politics of 'all or nothing' that Frank Anstey and other idealists championed.

There were two sources of sustained factional politics in Caucus. The AWU, the most powerful union in the country, already had a history of seeking to dominate three Labor state branches; the other faction was a product of the

LABOR AT THE KURRAJONG

Politicians liked to stay with their own kind when in Canberra. From the late 1920s the Kurrajong Hotel was Labor territory, while their conservative opponents preferred the Hotel Canberra. Of course, there were exceptions. Paul Hasluck stayed at the Kurrajong, and James Scullin moved to the Hotel Canberra while he was Prime Minister. This perhaps added to the perception held by many of his colleagues that Scullin was too isolated from Caucus, because for almost 50 years the Hotel Kurrajong not only offered the comforts of an alternative home, and the facilities of a social club, but also abundant opportunities for Caucus intrigue. During Curtin's and Chifley's reigns, said one commentator, virtually the whole Caucus breakfasted together.

Designed by the architect of Old Parliament House, J. S. Murdoch, the Hotel Kurrajong was a series of two-storey accommodation blocks, with garden courtyards, connected to the central section by covered walkways. Barry Price has recorded its history in a volume of Canberra's *Early Hotels*, edited by Shirley Purchase in 1999. There were shared bathrooms and sitting rooms, windy verandahs, and no central heating until the 1960s. On National Circuit, the Kurrajong was a short walk across the fields from Parliament House. When Fred Daly arrived in 1943, however, the street lights were blacked out as a wartime precaution and, if after an evening debate, members missed the white markings on the footpaths, they were all too likely to end up back at Parliament House.

Opened when Labor was in Opposition, the Kurrajong did not begin to earn its place in Labor folklore until after the increase in FPLP members at the 1929 elections. The jubilant mood was still strong six weeks later, when Senator Lynch (Nationalist) complained in the House that 'on the previous evening a number of lead-

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After the opening of Parliament House in Canberra in 1927, the Hotel Kurrajong became a home-away-from-home for many members of Caucus. (E. W. Searle Collection, National Library of Australia)

ing Labour men, including Ministers, had sung *The Red Flag* in the Hotel Kurrajong, thereby greatly offending other guests'. This was during the brief period when the Kurrajong was a licensed hotel, with thirteen varieties of whisky for sale. The Kurrajong's reputation for good fellowship survived the loss of the liquor licence in 1933. Typical was the experience of Eric Costa, who returned to his room one night to find a big red setter dog, unwilling to exchange a warm bed for the icy floor, having been coaxed therein by a group of Labor men led by Eddie Ward. Such high spirits could not go on forever; there must have been many times when members were depressed by the absence of families, the stiff formality of the dining room, the ubiquitous brown linoleum, and the kapok mattresses.

Belle Southwell, the manager until her death in 1946, eased the loneliness of some members. Chifley and his secretary often joined Curtin and Belle for a game of bridge in her private sitting room. According to David Day in his biography of *John Curtin*, Belle's sitting room 'became a second home to Curtin, as it did for several other Labor MPs. The group became known as

“South’s Caucus” and Curtin bought Belle a lamp and other gifts in appreciation of her friendship’. The Kurrajong was, thus, not entirely a masculine place. Some families were in residence, although in a separate wing. Jack Beasley’s children stayed there, as did John Dedman’s daughter, Frank Forde’s two daughters, and later Arthur Calwell’s two children.

When Chifley became Prime Minister he remained at the Kurrajong, leaving at 8.30 in the morning and returning at about midnight. Barry Price recounts that during the war Chifley’s neglect of meals prompted Curtin to issue a mock National Security Regulation: ‘One J. B. Chifley shall, while Commonwealth Defence powers prevail,

eat one plate of soup, one helping of meat and vegetables, and one dessert nightly at the Hotel Kurrajong.’ It was in room 205 of the Kurrajong that Chifley suffered the heart attack that killed him in 1951.

After renovation in the 1960s the Kurrajong continued to attract members of Caucus, including Bill Hayden and Frank Crean. Until his marriage in 1975, Paul Keating stayed there. By this time, however, modern Canberra could offer newer hotels and flats, and visiting parliamentarians, even in the Labor Party, found the attractions of being modern hard to resist. The Kurrajong closed in 1976.

Terry Irving

machine led by Jack Lang in New South Wales, and was bitterly opposed to the AWU. Each circulated a ticket for the Ministry after the victory of 1929, but there was such a large degree of overlap that 9 out of 13 ministers could claim to be supported by both factions. This also applied to the Leader and Deputy Leader, Scullin and Ted Theodore, who both had AWU links.⁶ Even before the financial crisis became apparent, however, the honeymoon was over. In late 1929 Rowley James (Hunter, NSW) moved the adjournment of the House to criticise his own government’s failure to support the locked-out coalminers in New South Wales. He was joined by Bert Lazzarini (Werriwa, NSW) and David Watkins. The tendency at this stage for ministers to stick together was revealed in the refusal of Jack Beasley (West Sydney) and Arthur Blakeley, both from New South Wales, to join the Langite New South Wales Executive’s attack on Theodore. As a minister, Theodore angrily asserted that he would not submit to non-parliamentary dictation over this issue, although as a good AWU man he thought he had to add that he recognised the ‘ultimate control of the Labour movement as a whole’.⁷

By March 1930 the Depression’s effects on employment, government revenue and exports could not be ignored. The first financial debate in Caucus was ‘earnest’; a week later irreconcilable differences over credit expansion or economy in government surfaced. George Yates (Adelaide, SA), prevented by Scullin from moving an addendum to the ministerial financial statement, took his grievance to the House, where he argued that the government should require the Commonwealth Bank to issue credit to stimulate production. Over the next few months this proposed solution, which was seen as having the merits of immediately reducing unemployment while pointing the finger of blame at the banks, attracted not only the members with trade union connections but also those with socialist or populist ideas. The Commonwealth Bank Board, the private banks, the non-Labor press and the conservative parties reacted with

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The first meeting of Jim Scullin's Ministry in October 1929. Standing: Frank Brennan, Arthur Blakeley, Frank Forde, John Barnes. Seated: Jack Beasley, Joe Lyons, James Fenton, Ted Theodore, Jim Scullin, John Daly, Frank Anstey, Parker Moloney, Albert Green. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives)

horror at its inflationary implications, pointing to the hyper-inflation preceding the German economic collapse. Scullin and Theodore knew the Commonwealth Bank, and its chief Sir Robert Gibson, would never agree to such a radical step as credit expansion. Meanwhile the government's more moderate banking reforms had no hope of passing the Senate, where the conservative parties had a huge majority. The Labor leaders knew also that each of the remaining avenues for action would either hurt their supporters (as in cutting pensions, government salaries and services) or fail to ameliorate their suffering (as in increasing taxation, or raising a new loan from the Australian people).

Caught between a rock and a hard place, Caucus members sought to relieve their frustrations.⁸ A succession of minor issues, on which the government could not act because of its minority status in the Senate, became occasions for attacks on ministers. In the Cabinet, Anstey was threatening to resign over the failure of the banking bills; from the first days of the new government he had wanted a double dissolution, but now he feared it was too late.⁹ Scullin and Theodore were irritated by the constant pin-pricking from Yates, and the Langites, Lazzarini and Eldridge (Martin, NSW).¹⁰ Caucus meetings were protracted and stormy. There were 50 meetings in 1930, almost double the average number per year for the rest of the decade. As unemployment continued to grow and the financial situation worsened, a desperate Scullin unwisely embraced the Melbourne Agreement, based on advice from the emissary of the Bank of England, Sir Otto Niemeyer, that Australian governments should balance their budgets and workers should take a cut in wages. By this time Theodore had resigned from Cabinet over the adverse findings of the royal commission into

the Mungana mines (which were purchased by the Queensland government when Theodore was Premier). Then Scullin went to London to attend the Imperial Conference, leaving James Fenton (Maribyrnong, Vic.) as Acting Prime Minister and Joseph Lyons (Wilmot, Tas.) as Acting Treasurer.

Described by Whittington as ‘professional Labor politicians’ with neither strong union backing nor deep-rooted Labor convictions, the men around Lyons, who emerged as the champion of the Melbourne Agreement, were powerless to withstand the Caucus offensive against the Ministry in the last months of 1930.¹¹ In October, Labor’s sweeping victory in the New South Wales elections, fought by Lang on a platform opposing the Melbourne Agreement, strengthened the view among unionists that this was the true Labor position. The conversion of Theodore to the policy of credit expansion further undermined the Ministry. Moreover Caucus now knew that, just before Scullin departed for England, Cabinet had re-appointed Sir Robert Gibson without keeping a promise to consult it. Thus, a showdown was widely expected at the first Caucus meeting for the new parliamentary session.¹² It began on the Monday after Labor’s New South Wales win and lasted for four days. Lyons and Fenton tried to disarm their critics by placing the emphasis in their draft financial statement on increasing income tax rather than cutting wages and government expenditure. Anstey threatened to resign from Cabinet if Caucus adopted the statement as policy. Theodore attacked the Ministry for putting the fate of the government in the hands of the Bank of England and predicted that the government would have to precipitate a crisis to force the Australian banks to comply with Labor policy. What was that policy? It was set out in the resolutions moved by George Gibbons (Calare, NSW), widely thought to be a cipher for Theodore.¹³ The most important resolution required the Commonwealth Bank to create £20 million of credit to finance Commonwealth and state government works programs. By adopting Gibbons’ resolutions, 26 to 14, and rejecting the Lyons draft, the Caucus succeeded in reversing the general direction that the government had been following for a year. It was ‘the greatest display of solidarity ever seen since Federation’, according to Chifley.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the atmosphere was so fraught that members found excuses not to attend the ever more frequent meetings. Caucus met on 12 days out of 20 in the last two months of 1930, and often a fifth to a quarter of the members were absent. According to Anstey, ‘there were whisperers, listeners, urgers and carrier pigeons. If they stirred up more than expected, they became sick and were absent from the vote’.¹⁵ But enough of the ‘extremists’, as the press called them, attended to inflict a series of defeats on the Cabinet. For example, Lyons had planned to cut expenditure, in line with the Melbourne Agreement, by £4 million but Caucus restricted him to less than half that amount. Caucus members were appointed to lobby ministers to obtain special assistance for particular industries. Although Scullin was known to oppose an export duty on sheepskins with wool (to assist the fellmongering industry) and a bonus on gold production, Caucus persuaded the Cabinet to support both measures. Although the Commonwealth Bank would only support a guaranteed price to wheat growers of 2s per bushel, and Cabinet thought that 2s 6d might be acceptable to the Bank, Caucus insisted on 3s. In mid-December Caucus instructed Cabinet

to fill two High Court vacancies against Scullin's wishes. In the latest move in a long-running campaign to grant members of the Waterside Workers Federation preference on the waterfront, the government was forced to proceed in a way that Scullin disapproved of in December.

The strategy of some in the anti-Ministry majority was to use the new radical credit and banking policies to force a double dissolution.¹⁶ Lyons refused to budge. He would not prepare legislation on these policies and he would not desist from following his own policy (in which, as we now know, he was encouraged by a business and political elite) of stumping the country to raise a new loan. With Scullin's cable of support in his hand he went to Caucus and threatened to resign. Meanwhile the New South Wales branch was getting cold feet about an election, which it could not afford so soon after its state campaign. It was time to back off, at least until Scullin returned in January 1931.

When Scullin returned he proposed to Caucus that Theodore (who had not been charged with any offence) should be reappointed Treasurer and Deputy Leader. From 11.00 am to late at night the argument raged until, by a narrow margin (24 to 19), Caucus agreed. It was Australia Day. Three days later Lyons and Fenton had left the Cabinet; six weeks later together with Gabb (Angas, SA), Price (Boothby, SA) and Guy (Bass, Tas.) they crossed the floor on a censure motion, and Lyons was set to emerge as Leader of the Opposition. Meanwhile, the Langites in Caucus had not been appeased by Theodore's reinstatement. Threatened by growing Labor support for Theodore's new radicalism in financial matters, Lang came to the Premiers' Conference in February with his own even more radical plan. A five-day Caucus meeting at the end of the month failed to support either, but in New South Wales the State Executive ruled that all federal MPs must support the Lang plan in the East Sydney by-election. Scullin responded in Caucus that he would not 'take dictation from any one section of the movement', and he had the support of the Federal Executive. On 19 February fifteen of the New South Wales members announced that they would support federal policy in East Sydney and Theodore finally received Caucus endorsement for his policy. The victors sang 'Solidarity Forever' after the vote but three weeks later seven of the Langites, led by Beasley, walked out of Caucus.¹⁷ In Parliament they sat on the cross-benches. Scullin's daring move in January had made him the Prime Minister of a minority government in March.

Scullin had no other choice than to reappoint Theodore, but not just for 'the simple reason that, of all caucus members, he was best equipped with the technical skills for the post'.¹⁸ Such a view shows a failure of historical imagination. When Scullin returned to Australia he was facing the possibility that there would be a spill of all Caucus positions in which he would lose his leadership. His views on policy had been repeatedly disregarded while he was overseas, and he had the support of no organised faction. There was press speculation that Richard Keane (Bendigo, Vic.) might emerge as a surrogate for Theodore as Prime Minister.¹⁹ Fantastic as this may seem in hindsight, the situation was certainly volatile and unpredictable. Scullin at first flirted with the New South Wales branch; then he made up his mind to support Theodore. The object in both cases was to head off a full-scale reconstitution of the

THE LITTLE DOCTOR

William Robert Nuttall Maloney (1854–1940), member for Melbourne between 1904 and 1940, was born in West Melbourne. His mother received support from her brother-in-law W. J. T. ‘Big’ Clarke. As Geoffrey Serle pointed out in Maloney’s *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry, this led to the assumption ‘that Clarke was the father and he provided for the boy in his will’.

Maloney was educated at state schools and Scotch College in Melbourne, worked in a bank, cleared land with his mother, and in 1880 began medical studies in London. He was horrified by London’s poverty, spent much time in Paris and cultivated the artists Tom Roberts and John Russell. Serle noted that ‘Maloney adopted a Bohemian style: cream silk suit, red or yellow tie or bow-tie, panama hat, waxed moustache and goatee beard’.

He returned to Australia in 1887, setting up practice in North Melbourne. He served as a Labor member in the Victorian Parliament 1889–1901, advocating women’s suffrage, old-age and invalid pensions, and a republic. Serle commented that ‘Maloney’s philosophy was always misty but he was essentially an international socialist in the European social democratic tradition’. He hurled himself rashly into many causes and won a reputation for extremism and eccentricity. He established a clinic in North Melbourne in about 1896 which survived until 1950, offering welfare counselling as much as medical advice, and promoting birth control (a radical stance at the time). He gave away much of his income.

He contested the federal seat of Melbourne in 1901 and 1903 and lost both times. However, he appealed successfully after the 1903 poll and won a by-election in March 1904.

Maloney was friendly with King O’Malley and joined his ‘torpedo brigade’ of Caucus members determined to establish a national



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During his 36 years in Caucus, William Maloney was well known for a Bohemian style that included a goatee beard and waxed moustache. (National Library of Australia)

bank. He was a strong supporter of the White Australia Policy, and was anti-Japanese and anti-militarist. He opposed the Boer War, but supported World War I, campaigning for volunteers but against conscription. Never a minister, Maloney was derided as a political lightweight and had a tendency to veer off in unexpected directions—for example, a brief flirtation with Douglas Credit. He campaigned for free creches and free kindergartens. A great traveller, Maloney visited Europe, Asia and North America. Maloney visited the USSR at the age of 83—although 1937 was not a good time to go.

He retired from the seat in August 1940 and died two days later. His successor in Melbourne was Arthur Calwell (the future Federal Leader). Calwell had been Maloney’s campaign director for a decade, admired ‘The Little Doctor’ and adopted many of his policy positions, but was exasperated by his failure to retire.

Barry Jones

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*Election advertisement. Following the transformation of 'Stabber Jack' Beasley and his six colleagues into Lang Labor, Henry Boote's **Australian Worker** remained firmly behind the 'genuine ALP candidates'. (**Australian Worker**, 9 December 1931; National Library of Australia)*

Ministry. His decision to support Theodore confused his enemies and, given the situation, that was his only option. As it turned out, it alienated the followers of Lyons and the hard-core Langites, but it consolidated his leadership.

For the remainder of the government's life Scullin received majority support in Caucus for his policies. Even when, facing the bankruptcy of his government, Scullin (and Theodore) agreed in June to the Premier's Plan to increase taxation and reduce expenditure by 20 per cent, he was able to muster 26 votes against 13 for his opponents. Curtin was among the minority, as were two ministers—Ted Holloway and Charles Culley (Denison, Tas.)—who forthwith resigned. Pressure was building for another split, but the Federal Executive ruled, while regretting that wages and pensions had to be reduced, that members of the FPLP would have a free vote on Bills to implement the Premier's Plan.²⁰ So it was that eleven of the Caucus joined the seven Langites to become the only opposition in Parliament to these Bills, as the conservatives voted with Labor, and Scullin survived again. Outside Parliament all the signs were that the great majority of Party members opposed the Premier's Plan. Thus emboldened, the Caucus minority led by Holloway, Keane, Yates and Norman Makin continued their attack, demanding credit expansion—still officially federal Party policy—and a double dissolution.

The Party knew what its policy was but it also knew that it could not afford it. It was a time of tics and grimaces. Dr William Maloney (Melbourne, Vic.), always full of nostrums and sympathy, moved:

that in view of the fact that God has not forgotten Australia and that nature has been most bountiful in her gifts of wheat, meat and wool and, notwithstanding these bountiful gifts, there is great and undeserved poverty, misery and want throughout Australia, it is the opinion of the Federal Labour Party that the Government should nationalise wheat with the intention of providing free bread to the people of Australia in order to prevent any man, woman or child suffering from hunger.

The motion was flicked in the direction of the Treasurer without a vote.²¹

One reason why Scullin's Caucus majority held was that Party loyalty strengthened to meet the presence of the Langites in Parliament. Led by the 'suave, shrewd, deadly courteous, and immensely capable' Jack Beasley, the Langites had no purpose other than to hurt Lang's enemies, especially Theodore.²² This they could do best by bringing down the Scullin government and, with an election due in 1932, their time was running out. They struck in November 1931. Beasley moved the adjournment of the House, claiming Theodore and other ministers had improperly influenced the allocation of jobs at Cockatoo Docks. Scullin and Theodore told Caucus members not to worry; the issue was too minor to bring down the government. When the unexpected happened, and the Opposition voted with the Langites, Scullin had no alternative but to ask for the dissolution of Parliament. From then on, Beasley was known in Labor circles as 'Stabber Jack'.

Before the federal elections of December 1931 there were 41 in Caucus; after, just 23. Of those defeated, Theodore, whom many thought would be a Labor Leader, never returned to Parliament. Two future Labor Prime Ministers were also out of Parliament—Curtin until 1934 and Chifley until 1940. There were two new faces among the MHRs—Francis Baker (Oxley, Qld) and George Lawson (Brisbane, Qld). Holloway (Melbourne Ports, Vic.) and Makin were re-elected and, together with 'Darby' Riordan (Kennedy, Qld), they made up the non-officer section of the new Executive of Caucus. Scullin was elected unopposed as Leader, and Frank Forde (Capricornia, Qld) became Deputy Leader.

This was a tribute to Scullin's integrity. Perhaps too he had learnt the importance of better communication with Caucus. Although there had been no Caucus executive during the term of his government, the first meeting in 1932 restored this institution.²³ In the diminished world of the new Caucus, cooperation between the officers and the members would be the operative principle. There were other signs of the changed relationship. Meetings were shorter and the minutes less revealing, sometimes only a line or two. There were no lists of absentees and only occasional lists of attendees. On the very few occasions when votes were taken, the numbers for and against were not recorded. If there were any leaks about Caucus deliberations, they were not significant enough to be reported by journalists. A typical meeting between 1932 and 1935 heard a report from the Executive containing recommendations on Bills or tactics to be followed in Parliament. These recommendations were

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The diminished ranks of the FLP, c.1934. Back: Charlie Frost, Ted Holloway, John Dooley, Gordon Brown. Second row: Maurice Blackburn, William Mahoney, John McDonald, George Martens, Claude Barnard. Third row: Francis Baker, David Riordan, Arthur Drakeford, William Maloney, Frank Brennan, Albert Green. Fourth row: George Lawson, Joseph Collings, Norman Makin, John Curtin. Seated: John Barnes, Jim Scullin, Frank Forde. (Whiteford Collection, National Library of Australia)

invariably accepted. The Secretary presented correspondence from unions and Party bodies, and members decided amicably the appropriate action in response. Although Scullin was an active supporter of the struggling ‘Federal’ Labor organisation in New South Wales, decisions at Caucus meetings rarely reflected the bitter dispute in that state against the Lang machine.

The one possible exception was of greatest significance to the Party—the election of Curtin as Leader in October 1935. When illness forced Scullin to resign, even Curtin expected that the leadership would pass to his Deputy, Frank Forde. At the very last moment Curtin was nominated and defeated Forde by 11 votes to 10. The evidence does not exist to explain this outcome conclusively. No doubt plausible arguments can be constructed at a biographical level about the motives of the participants.²⁴ However, speculation by political insiders at the time pointed to an explanation in terms of the inner-Party dynamics. According to this approach, Curtin’s victory was the result of a split among the Queenslanders in Caucus, organised secretly by ‘Darby’ Riordan. Behind Riordan stood fellow Queenslander, G. C. Fallon, AWU General Secretary and Federal President of the Party. The electoral defeat of 1934 meant that Party unity was now the paramount issue for the federal leadership. Forde, who had voted for the Premier’s Plan, would never be acceptable in New South Wales to the Lang machine which had almost wiped out the ‘Federal’ Party at the

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By July 1938 Jack Beasley was back in the Labor fold and welcomed four New South Wales Senators on their arrival in Canberra. Left to right: Senate Leader Joseph Collings, William Ashley, Beasley, John Armstrong, Thomas Arthur and Stanley Amour. With candidates in alphabetical order on the Senate ballot paper, the endorsement of the 'four As' allowed Labor to issue an easy to follow how-to-vote ticket and capture the donkey vote. (Beasley Collection, National Archives of Australia)

1934 elections. Curtin, like Riordan, had voted against it. If the new Leader's first task were to unite the Party around his leadership, Curtin would have infinitely more appeal to the Langites than Forde.²⁵

Curtin had a clear conception of the role of the Leader and of Caucus in the wider Party. The basic strength of Curtin's leadership was that he never lost sight of the Party, carrying it with him through consultation and encouragement, and through the strength of belief in its progressive role. Soon after assuming the leadership he took his 'optimistic message on a rail tour of Australian towns and cities to meet with the scattered forces of the labour movement'.²⁶ To Lang's supporters in New South Wales he was friendly without compromising the power of the Party's federal bodies, and he was willing to cooperate with Beasley, their leader in Parliament.²⁷ By early 1936, the Party had reinstated the Langites as the official branch in New South Wales, and Caucus had readmitted nine of Lang's followers, two of whom, Beasley and Sol Rosevear (Dalley, NSW) were elected to the Executive in April. When, however, the Lang forces threatened to disrupt Caucus again, Beasley and Rosevear were replaced on the Executive by Lazzarini and Eddie Ward (East Sydney, NSW), who were moving away from Lang. The survival instinct among the majority of the Caucus, fed by memories of 1931, was still strong, and Curtin knew he could depend on it.

These developments were underpinned by a close working relationship, facilitated by Curtin, between Caucus and the Federal Executive. Caucus indicated its good intentions by establishing committees to improve publicity for the Party. In return, Curtin expected that Caucus members would be protected from interference from their state executives.²⁸ After the Queensland Executive instructed MPs from that state to support a Lyons Government referendum on marketing in defiance of federal policy, Curtin ensured that the Federal Executive resolved in April 1937 that state executives could not instruct Caucus members on matters covered by the federal Platform or on federal legislation.²⁹ A Federal Labor Advisory Committee—with representatives from the ACTU, the Federal Executive and Caucus—was set up to improve communication. State branches, however, were still outside the loop. So, when the Lang machine tried to involve Caucus in its drive to amend the Party's constitution to de-federalise and so advantage New South Wales, the largest state, Caucus was careful to insist that its committee on this question would have no discussions with state executives. Nor did Caucus fall into the trap of accepting an invitation from Lang's opponents in New South Wales to attend their 'unofficial' conference. There were other occasions, too, when Caucus had to remind state leaders to consult with it before dealing with Commonwealth ministers or public servants, or commenting on Commonwealth issues. Throughout Curtin's period as Leader there was a perceptible shift in power to the federal authorities in the Party, and within Caucus a corresponding growth in federal identification.

None of this would have been possible if Curtin had not shown himself to be as adept in handling Caucus as he was the wider Party. Despite the reappearance in Caucus of Langite mischief in 1938, Curtin suffered only one serious defeat in Caucus—over the tactics to be followed in regard to the National Insurance Bill—and on that occasion he cleverly co-opted his opponents. On another occasion he agreed to alter his speech on local oil production—a favourite left topic—thus softening a blow that this section of Caucus had just taken on the issue of protesting against the government's prohibition of assemblies within 100 yards of Parliament. Usually his suggestions were accepted, because they moderated extreme proposals without sacrificing basic principles. In this way he built up a culture of principled pragmatism in the Caucus, a more mature acceptance by members that their decisions had to be responsible and media-conscious. This in turn legitimated the democratic powers of Caucus and enhanced its status in the Party. As an indication of its influence, in the last four years of the decade Caucus received an increasing flow of letters and deputations from sections of the movement.

The story of Caucus in the 1930s, then, is most importantly a story of maturation—of the FPLP learning that the discipline required for governing is not the same as the discipline of representing a movement. In the last four years of the decade Caucus learnt this lesson again. The intrigues and failures of the first two years of the decade, culminating in the splits of 1931, did not discredit Caucus nor its place in Labor's democratic practices. On the contrary, by playing its part in enhancing federal authority in the Party, Caucus under Curtin's leadership was more capable in 1939 than it had ever been before to influence the Party's leadership and policy.

But this was only part of the story, and only one aspect of Curtin's skill as Party leader. In 1940, in what might have been a sorry re-run of 1931, the Caucus entered a new period of fractious debate over how to prosecute the war and whether to break with the Party's visceral opposition to conscription. Even before Caucus met for the first time in April 1940, the Easter Conference of the New South Wales branch had cracked the façade of Party unity. Reflecting the influence of both the Communist Party's pro-Sovietism and traditional Labor isolationism, the branch called for a negotiated peace, and opposed widening the war by an attack on the Soviet Union. This 'hands off Russia' resolution was the opening the Langites had been waiting for, re-establishing their party in New South Wales as the Non-Communist Australian Labor Party. Beasley then led his six followers out of the Caucus.³⁰

Curtin was bitter, but made the right move by shifting the spotlight on to the issues and the legitimate channels for making Party policy. It is sometimes forgotten that it was Curtin who initiated the call to the state branches for a Special Commonwealth Conference on the Party's policy during the war, and that he used the Caucus as his forum. It was also a politic move in view of the difficulties he was facing from a loose group of Left members in Caucus. Led by Ward and Brennan, they were dismayed by his reluctance to undermine the war effort by mounting an all-out attack on Prime Minister Menzies. Blackburn (Bourke, Vic.), for whom the war represented a massive danger to civil liberties, was also active in this group. He led the attack on the National Security Bill,

crossing the floor with Ward, Brennan and Maloney to vote against the second reading. 'Blackburn and Brennan—what have they ever done for the Labor movement,' Curtin muttered as he left a Caucus meeting at this time.³¹ Having mobilised the Party machinery for settling the policy issues, Curtin was not shy about telling Caucus what the real issue was for them: the Left members were impairing the 'position of his leadership'. The majority of Caucus agreed. After the September 1940 elections, Ward and Brennan were dropped from the new FPLP Executive.

Labor's failure to win the 1940 elections did not improve Curtin's standing as Leader. With 49 members the Caucus was almost as large as it was after the 1929 elections and, as the Menzies government relied on the support of independents, it was difficult for Curtin to restrain those who thought that Labor should break into the circles of government. There were two ways to do this: entering a national government or destabilising and replacing the existing government. The first was anathema to those who believed strongly in the distinctive class or movement character of the Party, the second was risky (Curtin warned Caucus that the votes of the Beasley group could not be relied on) and might be perceived as disloyal in wartime. Although the Commonwealth Conference in June had decided that Labor should not participate in a national government, Curtin brought the issue to Caucus in October, aware that the worsening war situation and Menzies' persistent overtures to the Party were undermining support for the official position.

Ward was the most vehement opponent of a national government. H. V. 'Doc' Evatt (Barton, NSW), ambitious for government rank but a novice in Caucus tactics, moved the successful motion that Caucus leaders should participate in talks with other parties and the independents about a national government. As Caucus instructed its negotiators that Labor's participation in a national government was conditional on its 'social, industrial and financial policy' being adopted, there was no chance that Menzies would agree. However, an Advisory War Council (AWC) was set up, with three members from Caucus (and Beasley). Even this went too far for the Left. Their unhappiness was revealed in an unsuccessful proposal by George Martens (Herbert, Qld) and Ward that Caucus should elect its chairman, a move designed to check Curtin's dominance.

Two weeks of Caucus discussions in December on the Budget crystallised the fears of the Left, but also revealed a wider dissatisfaction. The AWC, with Labor participation, discussed the Budget before it was presented to Parliament, with the aim of finding a compromise acceptable to all parties. Curtin brought to Caucus a set of general statements defining Labor's attitude to the Budget but was forced to return to the Executive for a proposal to move an amendment to the Budget, the traditional response from an Opposition. Responding at the AWC, Menzies made concessions on pensions, service pay and income tax but now insisted that Opposition members not raise in the House matters that could be raised in the Council. When Curtin and Forde reported favourably on these developments, Caucus erupted. The majority felt that the concessions were insufficient and that the AWC was usurping the role of Parliament. Dismayed by the attacks on his leadership, Curtin threatened to resign, and the atmos-

phere changed. Exhausted after five hours of argument, Caucus accepted Evatt's motion that negotiations with the government continue. On the following day at the AWC the government refused to make any further concessions. Curtin then proposed to Caucus that Labor accept the Budget as amended. Some members shifted to support Curtin, but there was strong resistance, from both Evatt's group of supporters of a national government and those who wanted nothing to do with Menzies. The vote to accept the Budget compromise was 24 to 19, giving Curtin the same narrow margin as Scullin had received at the crisis meeting on Australia Day, 1931.

Historians have emphasised the distance between Curtin's isolationism and anti-conscriptionism, as late as the 1937 elections, and his acceptance of a conscript militia, an expeditionary force, and a national security Act in 1940. Curtin's most recent biographer has contrasted his fiery socialist beginnings and his readiness to cooperate with Menzies during the war.³² The explanation for these changes is rightly attributed to Curtin's desire to keep Labor aligned with public opinion and to ensure that when the war was over a united Party was positioned 'so that the trophies of victory won't just be for non-workers'. In relation to the history of Caucus, however, what should be emphasised is Curtin's understanding of the limits of Caucus influence in the Party. Under his leadership federal authority in the Party strengthened, but Curtin never forgot that the federated branches had rights, and never stopped thinking in collective terms: 'We—Australia—you—the Party—me—the Movement—we're all threatened' by the war.³³

VICTORY TO DEFEAT: 1941–49

Graham Freudenberg

Curtin's worst fear, as the tumultuous year of 1941 began, was that Caucus would wreck the Labor Party by grabbing minority government in wartime. Not until September did he feel able to say with conviction: 'We are ready to govern.'¹ On 10 March, Curtin welcomed the last of the Langites, the Beasley Six,² back into the Caucus: 'The present unity betokens a better prospect and better things for our people.' The reunited Caucus immediately launched into four days and seven successive sessions of uproar and recrimination. Bert Lazzarini started it with a protest against Curtin's out-of-session appointment of Chifley and Evatt to government committees on manpower and post-war reconstruction, without Caucus approval. Scullin persuaded Caucus to confirm the appointments but affirm its right to make them. Ward attacked Curtin's collaboration with Menzies. He moved for Labor's immediate withdrawal from the Advisory War Council. Curtin and Ward traded accusations of leaking the Caucus brawl. Rowley James said he would move that the Leader of the Party should no longer be Chairman of Caucus. A section of the Caucus Minutes was doctored to mask the bitterness of it all. Yet a series of votes revealed an anti-Curtin core of only 12 to 15 in a Caucus of 53.³

From London on 22 April, Menzies cabled Curtin renewing his offer of an all-party 'national' government. Caucus endorsed Curtin's reply on 22 May, the day Menzies returned home 'with a sick feeling of repugnance and apprehension'.⁴ Curtin wrote: 'The mere political formula of a National Government would not add one scrap to our war efforts. Far from that, it would be the

signal for disturbances in our political, industrial and civil life that would be as dangerous as they would be inevitable.’⁵

In August Menzies made his last efforts to save his prime ministership. First, he sought Labor’s approval for another London mission. Curtin tentatively agreed. In the Parliamentary Executive, Forde and Makin warned him that Caucus would never wear it. Caucus adopted the Executive recommendation: ‘It is essential for Australia to have its Prime Minister here to direct the administration in the organisation of a total war effort.’ Yet this resolution of 21 August demonstrates Curtin’s great skill: making a virtue of necessity, he had converted a potential repudiation into a Caucus renewal of its commitment to the war against Hitler. Menzies wrote again next day, this time offering to serve in a national government under Curtin as Prime Minister. Caucus unanimously endorsed Curtin’s rejection on 26 August. Menzies resigned three days later and handed the prime ministership over to Arthur Fadden, the leader of the Country Party.

It was essential to Curtin’s whole strategy that Menzies’ downfall should be, and be seen to be, at the hands of his own Party. He prevented Caucus from framing any resolution for debate in Parliament until Fadden’s Budget. On 2 September, he said, ‘We will govern when we are given a mandate by the people to do so. If disintegration and dissension among our political opponents or ill-conceived policies on their part result in a call being made to Labor, then we are ready to govern.’⁶ Fadden, as he himself put it, ‘reigned like Noah’s Flood for 40 days and 40 nights’. On 3 October, after a debate in which Curtin allowed only six members of Caucus to speak, the House of Representatives voted 36 to 33 to put Labor into power.

On 6 October, Caucus took three hours and seven exhaustive ballots to elect the 19 ministers. In order of election, they were: Curtin and Forde (unopposed); Beasley, Chifley, Evatt, Ward, Dedman (Corio, Vic.), Scully (Gwydir, NSW), Frost (Franklin, Tas.), Senator Collings (Qld), Senator Keane (Vic.), Makin, Senator Ashley (NSW), Drakeford (Maribyrnong, Vic.) and Holloway all elected on the first ballot; Senator Fraser (WA), Senator Cameron (Vic.), Lazzarini over the next five ballots; and, on the last ballot, Lawson.⁷ The surprise omissions were Rosevear and Calwell (Melbourne, Vic.). Although Curtin did not run a ticket, Calwell always blamed his ‘slumbering resentment’ for his exclusion;⁸ Calwell’s own resentment never slumbered. On Scullin’s motion, Caucus gave this Labor Prime Minister the unprecedented and unrepeatable power to sack a minister.

Three weeks into government, Caucus flexed its muscles. Chifley outlined his first Budget, a few hours before he was due to present it to Parliament on 29 October. On Rosevear’s motion, by one vote, Caucus instructed Cabinet to recast the Budget and add 1s 6d to Chifley’s proposed 2s pension increase. To avoid such a public humiliation, Curtin and Chifley were able to rescind the instruction, on a promise to increase pensions to 25s in a fresh Budget ‘early in the new year’.

Even so spectacular an assertion of Caucus independence, however, did not prevent Alan Reid writing in the Sydney *Sunday Sun* on 9 November:

'HE DIDN'T EAT CHEESE'

Eddie Ward's career was one of the most controversial in the history of the federal Parliament. He split with the Langites in 1931, held ministries in the Curtin and Chifley Governments, made a number of unsuccessful tilts in leadership ballots, and maintained throughout an extraordinary commitment to his constituents in East Sydney. Opinions on Ward's contributions are strong and contradictory. He was loathed and feared by his political opponents and revered by his supporters. He died in harness in 1963.

Don Whittington, in *Ring the Bells—a Dictionary of Australian Federal Politics* (1956), wrote:

Among the non-Labor parties, Ward has been the most hated man in Federal politics ever since he entered the Federal Parliament. A vigorous and able debater, he neither sought nor gave mercy in his dealings with opposing parties . . . and indulged in personalities to a degree that exceeded generally accepted rules where his victims' private lives and affairs were concerned. He capitalised on class hatreds, refused to mix socially with political opponents, and was a confessed and relentless enemy of anyone he regarded as antipathetic to Labor ideas. When a Parliamentary dinner was given to W. M. Hughes to celebrate Hughes' 50 years in politics in 1944, Ward stayed away, explaining privately that he didn't eat cheese, reference to the fact that Hughes had, in Labor parlance, 'ratted' on the Labor Party in 1916.

Les Haylen, Ward's parliamentary colleague, offered this ringside view of Ward in action in *Twenty Years' Hard Labor* (1969):

Ward was the ideal man for the Labor voter. He fought Menzies in the House, unearthed rackets, flayed the rich, sympathised with the poor, kept an open door to all those who wanted to see

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Eddie Ward's bent-arm bowling action in a Federal vs State Members cricket match in December 1952 was far more benevolent towards batsmen than his parliamentary style was towards his conservative opponents.
(News Limited)

him and worked himself to death. Eddie was apologetic about the occasional holiday he took, rarely went overseas, lived in a terrace in the centre of his electorate. He was a Spartan. He neither drank nor smoked and ate most sparingly on all occasions. His mob oratory was terrific . . . Ward was all fire and fury with the devastating gift of a wisecrack to break up the tension he had, himself, created . . . Ward was not the accepted pattern of a Labor ranter. He came into the House to make his speech meticulously dressed, his iron grey hair swept back from his forehead, a small neatly arranged pile of notes in his hands . . . He looked like a dentist ready to drill. He had a rocket take-off—not for him, the preamble, the body of the speech, the lead off and the peroration. He was airborne

from the time his hand hit the table. He had few mannerisms, he touched his tie and in moments of stress, poked an imaginary handkerchief up his coat sleeve. Ward, at the top of his speech, appeared to me to be unaware any longer of his audience. Completely

set apart he was talking to himself, rapt, shaken, almost sightless, pouring out to the world the misery and anguish of his early life of poverty and deprivation in Surry Hills, until he found the Labor league and the silent rooms of rapt adoring listeners.

Mr Curtin today is wielding the big stick. He is being as ruthless in his own party as in Parliament. Nobody in Parliament can put his finger more accurately upon the multitudinous pulses that beat within the Federal Parliamentary Party, and at the moment the Party wants leadership. So it is getting it.

But now it was the nation, not just the Caucus, that needed leadership as never before. At a special meeting on 13 November, Curtin warned Caucus about the rapid deterioration in East Asia. The Japanese blow fell at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Inevitably the role of Caucus changed. Members understood and reconciled their three main duties: as loyal supporters of a wartime government; as representatives of their electors, in particular workers and pensioners; and as advocates of the Labor cause and Platform.

Even in the worst months of the war, Caucus insisted on its right to scrutinise and revise domestic policy. Five weeks after the defining moment of Australian history—the fall of Singapore on 15 February—it held Chifley strictly to his promise on pensions. It gained concessions on the means test for widows' pensions.⁹ On 20 April, Calwell failed in a move to establish a Caucus committee of five to overhaul the welfare system. But at the same meeting, he was Chifley's strongest supporter on uniform taxation against the opposition of the Labor states.

Throughout 1942 Curtin sought to allay Caucus anxiety about conscription for military service beyond Australia and its territories. As late as 26 October, Forde, the Army Minister, told Parliament: 'The Government will not be stampered by the foolish clamour of political opportunists.'¹⁰ In the Senate the leader of the government, Senator Collings, explicitly denied rumours that Curtin would refer overseas conscription to the forthcoming Special Party Conference, scheduled for 16 November to discuss Party reorganisation.¹¹ It was not until the third day of the Conference that Curtin, attending as a Western Australian delegate, suddenly produced his proposal to extend the area in which the militia conscripts could be deployed. He insisted that he sought from Conference not a new policy but a redefinition of 'the defence of Australia' under existing policy. Conference referred the matter to the state executives ahead of another Special Conference in January.

In Cabinet on 24 November, Ward accused Curtin of duplicity in bypassing Cabinet and Caucus. He stung Curtin to tears with his contemptible jibe: 'You are putting young men into the slaughterhouse. Thirty years ago you wouldn't go yourself.'¹² On 9 December, Curtin read to Caucus the statement he proposed to make in Parliament next day. He stressed its limited nature: 'Men can be sent to Darwin where they can be bombed but not to Timor to save Darwin

from being bombed.' Calwell moved: 'This Party is opposed to any proposals for the conscription of Australian manhood for overseas service as being fundamentally the same in principle as those which the Labor movement rejected in 1916.' Curtin ruled the motion out of order: 'It's in the hands of Federal Conference.' Thirteen members dissented. Several of them threatened to support an anti-conscription resolution moved in the House of Representatives by Maurice Blackburn, now sitting as an independent; he had been expelled by the Victorian branch for his obstinate belief that Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941 justified his continued involvement with the proscribed Australian-Soviet Friendship League. In the House, Charlie Morgan (Reid, NSW) declared: 'I envy him because on this occasion he can not only speak but also vote as he honestly thinks proper.'¹³

Curtin had revealed the real origins of the proposal in a confidential press briefing on 20 November. He admitted: 'The request on the one-army question came to Curtin from General MacArthur.' MacArthur, he said, was asking 'for all handicaps to be removed which would prevent his disposition of troops wherever they were needed'.¹⁴ Curtin had argued at the ALP Conference on 18 November: 'a barrage of criticism in Australia and the United States was directed at Australia that it would have Americans defend Darwin, but not Australians fight for the Philippines.'¹⁵ Like Hughes in 1916, Curtin was essentially responding to external pressures. Unlike Hughes, he adapted his response to the will of the Party.

It was never a question of urgent military necessity. From May 1942 CMF units had become available for unrestricted service whenever 75 per cent volunteered. Caucus accepted this. Paul Hasluck wrote in the official war history that after July 1943, with the return of the 9th Division from the Middle East: 'The transference of volunteers from CMF to AIF provided a force more than sufficient for any commitments for service overseas'.¹⁶ Nor did the Defence (Citizens' Military Forces) Bill create 'one army'. It did not even extend overseas service to cover the whole of MacArthur's command. The new zone stopped at the Equator, well south of the Philippines and even Malaya. The military historian John Robertson wrote that 'Curtin gave a significant portion of his time and skills to achieving a result which was virtually meaningless in ultimate military terms'.¹⁷ Inasmuch as Curtin's final proposal fell far short of MacArthur's demands and Washington's expectations, the conclusion seems inescapable: almost unawares, the anti-conscriptionists in Caucus and the Party outside had won a significant victory.

When Curtin locked in support from the state executives of New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia, Ross Gollan, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Canberra correspondent, wrote on 7 December: 'Mr Curtin seems to have won his fight to save two of his religions—Australia and the labour movement.' With Victoria and Queensland adamantly opposed, the Special Conference adopted Curtin's proposal on 4 January 1943.

'The hero of a hundred sham fights,' Curtin sneered at Calwell when Caucus debated votes for 18-year-old servicemen on 24 March 1943. Calwell retorted: 'The way you're going you'll finish up on the other side leading a National Government.' Curtin left the meeting and dictated a letter to Forde as Acting Chairman: 'I invite the Party either to dissociate itself from the accusation or

appoint another leader. Obviously, if the charge has a semblance of justification, the Party is in an invidious position in entrusting its leadership to a potential traitor.' Lazzarini called for Calwell's expulsion. Senator Lamp (Tas.), a World War I veteran, had to be restrained from punching Calwell. Calwell apologised. Caucus unanimously confirmed 'complete confidence in our Leader'. The Australian public never heard a whisper of this episode.¹⁸

The debate on the Defence (Citizens' Military Forces) Bill in February marked Parliament's return to business as usual. The Coalition majority in the Senate was beginning to show the signs of normal Tory disloyalty when deprived of power. The UAP Speaker and Chairman of Committees resigned in June. Caucus elected Rosevear and Joe Clark (Darling, NSW) to fill their places. The last vestiges of the parliamentary truce disappeared when Ward claimed that a missing departmental file would prove that Menzies and Fadden had planned to abandon the defence of Australia north of the 'Brisbane Line'. Curtin promptly appointed a royal commission, suspended Ward and called an election for 21 August 1943.

Curtin triumphed. Against a disintegrating Opposition, Labor's slogan—'Victory in war; victory in peace'—was irresistible. Labor returned 49 members of the Representatives and 22 senators—winning a majority in both houses for the first time since 1914. New senators included Labor's first woman federal member, Dorothy Tangney, an engine driver's daughter and a graduate of the University of Western Australia. On 20 September, the new Caucus re-elected the old Cabinet team, except Lawson who was replaced by Calwell. Calwell and Ward ran a ticket to support each other against Curtin's known wishes. Curtin told Don Rodgers, his indispensable press secretary and confidante: 'I've given Calwell Information. He's been fighting with the newspapers all the time, now he can learn to live with them. I've given Ward External Territories and Transport. The Japs have got the external territories and the army's got the transport.'¹⁹

'Caucus was a sabre-toothed tiger in those days and the rugged men who composed it spoke out,' Leslie Haylen (Parkes, NSW) claimed of the Caucus he entered in 1943.²⁰ This new Caucus earnestly believed in Labor's mandate for a new order in post-war Australia. Resentment against ministerial rubber-stamp treatment caused friction in the closing months of the war. There was a minor revolt on 1 March 1944 about the inadequacy of Evatt's Coal Bill. The *Daily Telegraph* reported: 'New members said that they had come into Parliament believing that Caucus ran the party and quickly found that draft bills were put before them for assent and that criticism was discouraged.'²¹ On 18 July, Morgan and Max Falstein (Watson, NSW) moved that 'Caucus assume responsibility for Post-War planning and lay down the procedures for the attainment thereof'. This sweeping, if splendidly vague, resolution was carried unanimously. Six weeks later, after Chifley had outlined his Budget, Morgan failed in a move to set up a standing committee of Caucus 'to consider and report on Financial Policy and all future Budgetary purposes'.²² Caucus demanded a special two-day meeting for a broad debate on post-war reconstruction. Ross Gollan wrote: 'Some political observers see a revival of the traditional Caucus control of the

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Caucus during World War II was the scene of many heated debates. However, in September 1943 Caucus Secretary George Martens, Prime Minister John Curtin and Deputy Leader Frank Forde (above) presided over a Caucus (below) that had just secured a decisive election victory. (Australian War Memorial, negative numbers PO139726 and PO139727)

Cabinet which, since Mr Curtin became Prime Minister, has been only lightly and half-heartedly exercised.’²³

Curtin was dying. Upon the news of his first heart attack, Caucus expressed on 13 November ‘its admiration of the manner in which he has led the nation through the years of crisis and assures him of its complete support in carrying out the great tasks that lie ahead’.²⁴ Curtin chaired his last Caucus on 26 April 1945; his last ruling was to declare lost Morgan’s renewed motion for a Caucus committee to coordinate post-war planning. At noon on 5 July, it fell to Forde to announce that Curtin had died at The Lodge early that morning. It was just six weeks before the end of the war against Japan. They met one week later to elect their new leader. An attempt to postpone the election until Evatt’s return from the United Nations in San Francisco failed. Chifley (45 votes) was elected over Forde (15), Makin (8) and Evatt (1). Forde was then elected Deputy (68 to Evatt’s 1).

'I am proud to be the mouthpiece of Caucus,' Chifley told Parliament when speaking on his great 1945 banking legislation.²⁵ But with the modesty there was mastery. For Haylen, 'the splendour of Chifley was his simplicity'; but he brought to Caucus management great subtlety, sensitivity and tactical resourcefulness. His confidence in the judgement of Caucus was founded upon the rock of his confidence in himself. By 1949, Senator Gordon Brown (Qld) would write: 'Chifley has a hold over his parliamentary flock that is amazing. He commands respect because of his innate fairness. He is above all a democrat; he will calmly accept the majority's decision.'²⁶ But in truth, the Caucus majority never made an important decision that Chifley did not shape and mould to his will.

One contrast between the Curtin and Chifley years lies in the wealth of information and explanation, in policy development as well as legislation, ministers provided to Caucus. Even allowing for the pressures of the war, the difference is striking. Chifley took pains to make members feel involved in the great work of post-war reconstruction. Even so, the *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent wrote on 1 July 1946: 'Behind the decision of the Federal Caucus this week to raise the property and income qualifications governing eligibility for pensions is the story of a battle against a mild Cabinet dictatorship over Labor social policy.' The previous September, Chifley had agreed to a six-member committee on the means test. In June the committee recommended a plan to eliminate the means test over eight years. In Caucus on 27 June, 'there was some plain talking, especially from those who have no reason to feel complacent about their political future'.²⁷ Chifley proposed to increase the limit on permissible weekly income for pensioners to 17s 6d. Caucus increased the limit to £1. Failing to quit while he was ahead, the committee chairman, Alan Fraser (Eden Monaro, NSW) moved: 'That the Leader be asked to submit to the Party proposals for the progressive elimination of the means test, to be included in his policy speech.' Chifley dryly 'suggested that the matter of framing the policy speech be left to Cabinet'.²⁸ As much as any leader before or since, he jealously protected this particular prerogative.

Against Menzies, now leading his fresh-minted Liberal Party, federal Labor won successive elections for the first time in its history on 28 September 1946. The Chifley Government retained its House of Representatives majority with 43 seats for a net loss of 6, including Forde's seat of Capricornia. It won 16 Senate vacancies and, after 1 July 1947, held 33 seats out of 36.

On 31 October, Evatt defeated Ward for Deputy, 43 to 33 after 4 ballots. In 11 ballots, Caucus chose for the new Ministry: Calwell, Dedman, Holloway, Johnson (Kalgoorlie, WA), Scully, Ward, Drakeford, Senator McKenna (Tas.), Senator Ashley, Lemmon (Forrest, WA), Pollard (Ballarat, Vic.), Senator Armstrong (NSW), Chambers (Adelaide, SA), Senator Cameron, Senator Courtice (Qld), Riordan and Barnard (Bass, Tas.). Ministers Lazzarini and Fraser lost out. Next day, Rosevear, the returning officer, admitted that Haylen had missed out by one 'misaid' vote.²⁹

The Caucus of the Eighteenth Parliament approved a reform program without precedent in volume, scope and substance. At its heart was the great expansion of the welfare system, based on the social services amendment approved at the referendum held on polling day—the only constitutional

amendment ever carried by a Labor government, and a partial redress for the total failure of Evatt's fourteen-power referendum in 1944.

Chifley was not given to hyperbole; yet his own word to describe his fight with Caucus over the Bretton Woods Agreement was 'Homeric'. Basic to President Roosevelt's vision of a post-war world of free trade, the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 established the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; it foreshadowed a world trade organisation. Ratification was needed by the end of 1946 if Australia were to benefit from original member status; hence the urgency about a decision which Chifley had delayed for more than a year. The Caucus majority against ratification reflected widespread fears at all levels of the Party about Australia's tariff protection; but Labor's deepest instincts and prejudices were also involved. Six months before the federal election, Ward had said on the ABC: 'I am convinced that the Agreement will enthrone a world dictatorship of private finance, more complete and terrible than any Hitlerite dream . . . undermine and destroy the democratic institutions of this country . . . pervert and paganise our Christian ideals.'³⁰ But this time he spoke for a majority.

Chifley deliberately chose to launch his quiet, understated campaign for ratification at the ALP Federal Executive, working closely with the Federal Secretary, Pat Kennelly. On 26 November at the Hotel Canberra, he secured a resolution from the Executive stating that 'the risks in standing out just outweigh the doubts and fears'. Next day the Executive adopted (7 to 5), a motion from Tom Burke (Perth, WA) allowing him to proceed. It rejected an amendment from Senator Lamp asserting the right of Caucus to decide international policy.³¹

Caucus debated the issue on 28 November and 4 December. At the second meeting, on the motion of Senator Finlay (SA), Caucus decided (29 to 26) to defer ratification pending a Federal Conference. During the parliamentary recess, Chifley persuaded the New South Wales, Western Australian and Tasmanian branches not to seek a Special Conference. (Under ALP rules, four state branches could convene a Special Federal Conference.) In February, the South Australian State Executive threatened its federal MPs that they must vote against Bretton Woods in Caucus 'on pain of loss of endorsement'. Chifley promptly secured from the Federal Executive a reaffirmation of its 1937 ruling that no state executive may direct federal members on any issue before Caucus.³² On 5 March 1947, Chifley told Caucus that there would be no Federal Conference and moved for ratification. Next day, Gaha (Denison, Tas.) and Duthie (Wilmot, Tas.) failed in a last-ditch move to give members a free vote on the issue. Chifley's motion was then carried. He had won his victory over Caucus by stressing and exploiting the authority of the Federal Executive. It set a fateful precedent which was to influence heavily the Party's history throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Jack Lang, a brooding vengeful presence in the House of Representatives since he defeated Morgan for Reid in September, presumed to speak for the dissidents: 'This is a betrayal of Australia and also of the Labor Party's Platform.

It hands control of the nation's credit over to an international cartel, a financial oligarchy. We shall become a vassal state.' Chifley made a noble reply: 'If we have any love for mankind and a desire to free future generations from the terrible happenings of the last 30 years, we must put our faith in these international organisations.'³³

Less than six months later, the same passions that divided Caucus against Chifley over Bretton Woods united it behind him with a groundswell of Labor pride and elation unequalled before or since. On Wednesday, 13 August 1947, the High Court upheld an appeal by the Melbourne City Council against the provision in Chifley's 1945 bank legislation compelling local government to 'bank Commonwealth'. Although not itself crucial to the central banking power, Chifley was convinced the decision foreshadowed a series of appeals designed to destroy the purpose and principles of his 1945 bank legislation. Cabinet met briefly on the Saturday. After it, Don Rodgers circulated a 42-word press release announcing the government's intention to nationalise the private banks of Australia.

The timing and terseness of Chifley's announcement gave rise to the still-repeated line that he acted in 'a fit of pique'; however, there is no need to assume conduct so out of character. Chifley argued consistently that his sole objective was to achieve national control of economic policy. With the lofty condescension of posterity, we may now see that the objective could be achieved—indeed better achieved—without bank nationalisation. But given that Chifley and his colleagues in Cabinet and Caucus genuinely believed, and many passionately, in this key plank of the ALP Platform, the question became for them not 'Why?', but 'Why not?'.

An enthusiastic Caucus endorsed the proposal on 16 September, by acclamation. They left the speeches for the marathon debate in Parliament in October and November. 'As the Government Whip,' said Arthur Fuller (Hume, NSW), 'I say . . . that there has never been a more united party in the history of this country than the Labor party on this great and momentous issue.' Bank nationalisation, said Fuller, 'will save democracy from destruction and hold civilization together'. Jim Hadley (Lilley, Qld) was 'elated' at 'the happiest moment of my life'. For Bill Edmonds (Herbert, Qld) bank nationalisation implemented the 'most sacred plank of the platform of the Australian Labor Party'. Bert Lazzarini had 'dreamt of and hoped for this legislation all my adult life'.

Joe Langtry (Riverina, NSW) recalled the bank crash of 1893 to show that 'private bankers know no mercy'. Bill O'Connor (West Sydney, NSW): 'The private banks . . . have been guilty of economic crimes that defy imagination.' Rowley James: 'The Scullin Labour government was smashed because it had to obey the dictates of the private bankers led by Sir Otto Niemeyer.' Fred Daly (Martin, NSW): 'The private banks have always been prepared . . . to wreck governments in order to preserve their own interests.' Dan Mulcahy (Lang, NSW) believed 'the people . . . are looking forward to . . . a system of banking that will save them in any future depression'. Tom Sheehan (Cook, NSW) declared that bank nationalisation would 'give the people of Australia real

‘GOOD ON YOU, DOUG’

‘Rowley’ James served as Member for Hunter from 1928 until he retired in 1958. As one of the seven Langites who split in 1931, he was out of Caucus until 1936. Don Whittington, in *Ring the Bells—a Dictionary of Australian Federal Politics* (1956), described Rowland ‘Rowley’ James as:

. . . a typically tough, truculent but likeable old-time Labor politician. A massively built ex-miner, with a booming voice, a highly developed sense of theatre, and a faculty for producing dramatic and melodramatic phrases, James was a personality in the House for many years . . . [He] was refreshingly free of inhibitions. He frequently abused other members, and even the Speaker, in loud tones. When General Douglas MacArthur of the U.S. Army, was given a seat beside the Speaker in 1942—a privilege reserved only for honoured visitors—James boomed out ‘Good on you, Doug’.

The *Newcastle Morning Herald* recalled a colourful Parliamentary career in its obituary after Rowley James’ death on 4 July 1962:

From the day he entered politics in 1928, Mr. James was never one to keep strictly to the procedure and custom of the House. No greater illustration of this could be given than the occasion when he stopped in the middle of a speech which was being broadcast to send a message to his dentist. He got away with that as successfully as he did when he made his maiden speech in 1928. That speech was completely out of order, but he was not easily silenced. A startled Press Gallery reported that no one would argue with him unless in the company of a few policemen who would be handy to pick up the remains.

In the 1940 election when Mr. Curtin was trailing in Fremantle with few votes to be counted, Mr. James wired the Labor leader offering to resign

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Ex-miner Rowley James photographed arriving at a mass meeting of coalminers at Bulli, NSW in March 1944. Throughout his parliamentary career James maintained a close interest in the working conditions of miners. (News Limited)

Hunter in his favour if the West Australia seat were lost.

Another colleague, Mr. Joe Gander, wired Mr. James: ‘Congratulations your offer to Curtin: If he doesn’t accept I will.’

freedom—freedom from the control of financial dictatorships and greedy monopolistic financiers’.

Nelson Lemmon, Chifley’s rising hope, asserted that the objective was ‘broad and democratic control over the nation’s financial policy’. Menzies, Lemmon said, had ‘prostitute[d] his talents for the purpose of serving the money masters’. George Lawson scoffed at Menzies’ claim that it was communist inspired: ‘The Labour party planned this measure long before the Communist party came into existence in Australia.’ Kim Beazley Snr (Fremantle, WA), one of the few speakers to attempt a direct and detailed rebuttal of Menzies, said the opposition to this measure was the ‘defence of the right to exploit’. Allan Fraser saw the Bill ‘ushering in a brighter day in which the spectre of undeserved poverty will be banished from Australian homes’.

Chifley closed the debate on 11 November with the first version of his Labor credo: ‘Let it not be forgotten that there is a light on the hill which guides the movement of which we are members. The light towards which we are striving is the well-being of the toiling members of the community.’ But not in this or any subsequent version did Chifley ever assert that nationalisation was itself ‘the light on the hill’, or the goal to which it was guiding the Party.

The previous Saturday, the Cain Labor government had been heavily defeated in the Victorian elections, forced and fought on the bank issue. In Caucus, Rosevear, Calwell and Haylen called for a propaganda campaign to counter the Opposition’s ‘war of nerves’. Chifley assured them: ‘He had no intention of swerving from the road on which we are travelling. He would march on and would not falter in the fight.’ That road would lead to the defeat of bank nationalisation in the High Court and the Privy Council. McKenna, on Evatt’s behalf, assured Caucus ‘that the whole case would be finalised within nine months’. Chifley’s sense of constitutional propriety led him into a crucial psychological blunder: without demur, Caucus agreed to his decision to abandon the campaign of Australia-wide public rallies, pending the outcome in the courts. The fervour of October evaporated. Menzies and the banks were given a free run.³⁴

Bank nationalisation, Menzies declared, was the ‘most drastic, most destructive piece in the Chifley pattern for the coming dictatorship in Australia’; it meant a ‘loss of liberty no less than if Hitler had passed triumphantly to London and the swastika had flown over this [Sydney Town] Hall’.³⁵ It was the last time Menzies ever gave Hitler a starring role in Australian politics; henceforth, the coming dictatorship in Australia was unequivocally communist. As the Cold War developed, the terms and tone of the debate began to change ominously. So did the mood in Caucus. Early in 1948, Falstein and Burke moved: ‘That Caucus appoint a committee of five to investigate immediately the activities of all organisations which, in the light of present world circumstances, may constitute a menace to security.’³⁶ The motion was defeated on the voices; but for Chifley, with his knowledge and intuition about the capacity of the communist issue to polarise the labour movement, it must have come as an alarm bell in the night.

Skilfully, relentlessly, Menzies, reinvigorated and almost reinvented, made each Labor initiative fit ‘the pattern of coming dictatorship’. It was a line that helped ensure the defeat of the referendum on price and rent control in May

1948. It fuelled the electorate's impatience with the retention of wartime controls. It reinforced the intransigence of the British Medical Association, the doctor's union, in negotiations over McKenna's Pharmaceutical Benefits Bill, comprehensively examined by Caucus throughout 1948 and struck down by the High Court as a form of 'civil conscription' in October 1949.

A stunning blow came on 11 August 1948 when the High Court ruled that the prohibition on private banking contravened Section 92. The decision's implications effectively nullified the socialist objective of the ALP Platform. There is a tell-tale sign of the decline of Caucus morale over the next twelve months in the Caucus Minutes: they record that on at least three separate occasions Chifley had to complain about poor attendances and unauthorised absences. Nevertheless, if there was a loss of momentum after the victory of the banks in what Menzies had called 'the second battle for Australia', there was no loss of faith in Chifley's leadership or judgement. The election still seemed eminently winnable. According to the national opinion poll, Labor support recovered rapidly from its lowest point of 46 per cent in February 1948; until mid-1949 it never fell below 50 per cent. The enlargement of the Parliament that Caucus had been urging since 1944 took the form of an increase of House of Representative seats to 121³⁷ and a consequential increase of the Senate to 60. Calwell's redistribution satisfied most sitting members and the Calwell-McKenna system of proportional representation in the Senate guaranteed Labor control for the next Parliament at least. Only Rosevear and Frank Brennan, who had fought every election since 1910, seem to have had strong reservations about the whole scheme. In any case, Calwell convinced men eager to be convinced: 'They can't win with Menzies.'

Caucus faith in Chifley's judgement was tested to the limit by his handling of the coal strike in the bitter winter of 1949. Called by the communist-controlled Miners' Federation over claims for a 35-hour week and long-service leave, it lasted seven weeks, threw half-a-million Australians out of work, cost £100 million in lost wages, devastated heavy industry and crippled the power and transport systems of the eastern capitals. Convinced that the strike represented an orchestrated communist attempt to destroy the arbitration system, Chifley declared: 'It will be boots and all.'³⁸ On 29 June, Caucus overrode the protests of Ward and Senators Katz (Vic.), Morrow (Tas.) and O'Flaherty (SA), to approve the National Emergency (Coal Strike) Bill freezing union funds. Evatt had, in fact, already brought the Bill into Parliament the previous day. Under the draconian Act, union leaders were jailed and the Miners' Federation fined. Commonwealth Police raided Marx House, the Communist Party headquarters in Sydney. At the end of July, Chifley ordered the Army to work open-cut mines in New South Wales. A team of Caucus speakers toured the coalfields and faced down deeply hostile audiences of miners and their families. On 10 August, mass meetings of miners rejected their leaders' call to continue the strike and voted to return to work. Quite apart from the traumatic impact on the labour movement, Menzies was able to claim vindication for his call to ban the Communist Party. The author of a recent history of Australia's Cold War, David Lowe, argues that 'Chifley's response to the strike brought the Cold War further into Australian public life'.³⁹

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A smiling Ben Chifley joins fellow Caucus members before the 1949 election. Pictured from left to right are John Dedman, Chifley, Gil Duthie, Arthur Calwell, Arthur Fuller (above), Bill Edmonds, and 'Doc' Evatt (partially obscured). The two figures in the foreground are unidentified. (Private collection, Mary-Elizabeth Calwell)

On 6 September, Tom Sheehan, the Caucus Secretary, moved for a pre-election pension rise of 5s. Chifley told Caucus: 'You can amend the Budget as you like. Of course changes will mean three weeks' adjournment for revisions and reprinting, but that needn't matter.' Sheehan withdrew his motion. Dorothy Tangney's call for child endowment for the first child and pleas for increases in the TPI and widows' pensions were likewise noted and ignored. Chifley justified the pre-election austerity by stressing the massive economic problems facing Britain and the sterling bloc. On 21 September, Caucus unanimously supported a 44 per cent devaluation of the Australian pound in line with sterling. Part of the price of standing by Britain and the British Labour Government in the sterling crisis was the reintroduction of petrol rationing on 15 November—the day after the Labor campaign launch. In his policy speech, Chifley stood resolutely on his government's record on full employment, social security and national development.

On 10 December, four ministers and seven backbenchers lost their seats; Labor seats in the expanded House rose by only 4 to 47, against the Coalition's 74. Labor's share of the vote was 46.7 per cent, a swing of 4.6 per cent from 1946. Chifley put the defeat down to 'the constant barrage over the radio and in the press whereby the Opposition succeeded in linking communism with socialism and socialism with the Labor Party and so creating a fear complex in the minds of a percentage of the middle class'. Dedman, one of the four defeated ministers, acknowledged the responsibility of Cabinet and Caucus for their unquestioning support of the strategy of 'running on the record'. Caucus compliance and complacency, perhaps, contributed. Very broadly, however, the Chifley Government was defeated by a combination of the Cold War and the coal strike. The issues involved became even more bitter because of the result; and thus, the 1949 defeat itself contained the seeds of the disasters which were to overtake the Caucus in the next deadly decade. Of the 76 members of the Chifley Caucus, only four—Beazley, Daly, Duthie and Senator Justin O'Byrne (Tas.)—were still members when Gough Whitlam led Labor to victory 23 years later.

CRISIS TO CRISIS: 1950–66

Sean Scalmer

Labor members gathered in Canberra early in 1950 to discuss the lessons of the Party's decisive defeat. After eight years of total war, fervent reformist aspiration, and substantial legislative achievement, Labor was cast back on to the Opposition benches. Only 47 Labor candidates had been returned to the House of Representatives, now with 121 members. How could this happen? Chastened, shocked, disillusioned, returned members variously considered the people's verdict. The word 'socialisation' hung in the corridors and in the Party room; had Labor's objective led to its demise? Ben Chifley, unopposed as Labor Leader, counselled adherence to the 'policy and principle of the Labor Party' with his customary plain-speaking and constancy of purpose.¹ On 15 March 1950, Chifley pointed out in Caucus that:

the Party should have no regrets that it was in Opposition because of its adherence to the Policy of the Labor Party and that its legislation over the last eight years was something to be very proud of. Members should remain loyal in all their activities and maintain the solidarity of the Party.²

Nonetheless, Chifley felt the loss of past comrades keenly. John Dedman, the Scottish-born socialist and former Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, was missing, as were a raft of other Labor stalwarts: Claude Barnard, the engine-driver and union official; farmers Joseph Langtry, Nelson Lemmon and William Scully; and Labor lawyers Williams (Robertson, NSW) and Falstein, among others. Former bootmaker and storeman, Robert Ernest Clothier (Senator, WA), and fellow members of the Upper Chamber, Collings and Lamp, would also depart the Caucus in May 1950, retiring from the fray with a commemorative

wireless set, and comradely thanks for their collective service. The old Labor men, born in the last century, sharing their youth with Labor's advance, and fixed upon unity in wartime, were passing on, inexorably.

This was mid-century, a moment of generational change. Hire purchase and Billy Graham were about to become popular; the era of full employment had begun. Lindsay Hassett was Australia's cricket captain and Robert Menzies was Prime Minister again. A pride of fresh Labor representatives had also entered the new Caucus to replace the old stagers. Among them were eight new members of the House of Representatives from Victoria—mostly younger, mostly Catholic, invariably anti-communist, and often with experience in white-collar employment or trade unionism. W. M. Bourke (Fawkner, Vic.) was a lawyer; E. W. Peters (Burke, Vic.) had been the president of the ALP Industrial Groups in the Clerks' Union; Standish Keon (Yarra, Vic.) had been secretary of the Victorian Public Service Association, and both he and Jack Mullens (Gellibrand, Vic.) had formerly represented Labor strongholds in the Victorian Legislative Assembly.

These men were not distinguished by long experience as wage workers, by craft or industrial unionism, or by immersion in the classics of socialism. They preferred Chesterton and Belloc to Marx and Engels, and their hatred of communism dominated their quarrel with capitalism. Organisationally, they drew on a long, collective association with the labour movement, but their major battles had been with fellow trade unionists, and communists, rather than with employers. Many relied upon organisational support from 'The Movement', a secret grouping of Roman Catholics dedicated to the fight against communism. They had cut their political teeth in the fight to rid unions of communist control, and to build a new, anti-communist political machine. They impressed older members with their zeal and sincere Christian orientation; but also disturbed those for whom Labor itself was a political religion, and solidarity the most cardinal of virtues. In the new Caucus their dual loyalty to the battle *for* Labor and the battle *against* communism would become the object of great personal and political tension.

The Labor Party had strongly opposed communism during the 1940s. It had established its own ALP Industrial Groups to combat communists within the unions, and had passed a range of legislative and administrative measures that repressed communist activity. However, in the 1950s, amidst the developing Cold War, these initiatives were soon outflanked by the new Liberal government, and Labor was forced to consider a number of additional policies. Would the Labor Party be prepared to endorse the banning of the Communist Party? Would it accede to Liberal demands for secret union ballots before industrial stoppages? For many sincere Labor supporters, these proposals were anathema, an assault on long-cherished freedoms of assembly and organisation. But for those associated with 'The Movement' and sometimes with the ALP Industrial Groups, they were thought useful, even necessary political tools. An unbridgeable gulf was beginning to open. Differences within the Party on these issues extended from Federal Conference, on to the Federal Executive, and into the Federal Caucus itself. They complicated the operation of Labor's distinctive decision-making.

According to the principles of Labor democracy, Federal Conference formed the policy, Federal Executive supervised it, and the Parliamentary Party

implemented it. But what if Labor had not yet formed a clear policy on new Liberal legislation to combat communism? And what if Labor responses were fractured, and a consensus not forthcoming? Under these circumstances, unity was precarious and hard-fought, and those Labor members most committed to their views might refuse to accept the binding force of slim, unstable Party majorities.

When the Liberal–Country Party government introduced a Bill to dissolve the Communist Party of Australia, the ALP was hopelessly divided. It was decided by the Caucus Executive to allow the Bill to pass, but to insist on a number of amendments that guaranteed the rights of appeal and restricted the actions of the state. However, the most committed of anti-communists from Victoria remained unsatisfied by this course. They brought forward motions in Caucus that the Bill be allowed to pass without amendment. When the numbers went against them, they moved immediately for the decision to be rescinded.³ When the numbers refused to shift within Caucus, those who supported the Bill mobilised at an organisational level. An unsuccessful attempt was made to forward the matter to a special Federal Conference.⁴

A special meeting of the Party's Federal Executive was held on 16 November 1950. Thanks largely to the intervention of influential MHR Tom Burke, the Western Australian delegation decided to move to a stronger anti-communist position, joining delegations from Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. Parliamentarians were now instructed to allow the Communist Party Dissolution Bill to pass, although they were still free to criticise 'controversial' elements.⁵ Through unrelenting persistence, strongly anti-communist Laborites had apparently won the day, and a split within the Party had been avoided. However, the principles of solidarity within movement and Party had been irreparably damaged.

The atmosphere within federal Caucus deteriorated. Gil Duthie confided in his diary that he had become 'upset at the behaviour of some new Members of Caucus who have torpedoed the harmony and unity characteristic of Old Caucus 1946–49. It is an irresponsible element loathe to accept discipline and silently hostile to Ben's leadership—Bad and dangerous'.⁶

The battle over the Communist Party Dissolution Bill signalled the beginning of a new, more conflictual era in Labor Party politics. Party majorities on particular issues were no longer accepted as binding between Labor Conferences. Instead, they had become little more than moments in a ceaseless, wider conflict to win 'the numbers' and to achieve organisational dominance. The distrust seeped outwards as individuals pursued their own, fervently held and often competing beliefs.

H. V. Evatt opted to lead a legal challenge against the Communist Party Dissolution Bill in the High Court, without consultation with the FPLP, individual colleagues, or with the Federal Executive. When his challenge was successful and a referendum on the Bill was subsequently held, Labor members were now directed by the Federal Executive to campaign against its passage. However, a number of Victorian and South Australian representatives flatly refused. Cyril Chambers declared that he 'could not in conscience associate himself with the campaign'.⁷

Evatt conducted an inspirational and successful battle to keep the Communist Party legal and freedom of association intact. However, Labor solidarity continued to decline. New South Wales Party President Jack Ferguson led an attack on 'sectarianism' and on the obsessive anti-communism developing in Labor's ranks. Countermotions alternatively supporting the ALP Industrial Groups and demanding they be banned swamped state Party Conferences. Press leakages became common, and the Federal Secretary was forced to warn members of the 'grave political consequences' of this undisciplined behaviour. In the heat of battle, long-standing Labor practices were cast aside for temporary political advantage. State executives wrestled with the Federal Executive for the primary position in the management of Party affairs between Conferences. Supporters of the Industrial Groups attempted to marginalise their opponents in the FPLP by insisting that parliamentarians should be ineligible for the position of Federal Secretary, or for vacancies on state executives. Many of these manoeuvres were unsuccessful, but over the mid-1950s the number of politicians who were also a part of the Party at an organisational level declined markedly. The number of parliamentarians on the Federal Executive, for example, fell from 6 out of 12 members in 1950 to just 2 by 1955. Labor was a battlefield.⁸

In November 1951 the acrimony boiled over on to the very floor of Parliament. Smarting from a Federal Executive reprimand for his lack of participation in the Anti-Communist Referendum, Jack Mullens launched a savage attack on communist author Frank Hardy and left-wing journalist Wilfred Burchett. When fellow Labor MHR Reg Pollard (Lalor, Vic.) dissociated himself from Mullens' speech, a flurry of insults flew between them. Mullens accused Pollard of 'defending the Coms'; Pollard thought Mullens 'a narrow-minded skunk'. Mullens leapt from his seat, over a partition, and lunged towards Pollard like a bar-room brawler. Only the timely intervention of Pat Galvin (Kingston, SA), a fellow Labor backbencher, prevented a more severe confrontation. Mullens was grabbed by the tie and unceremoniously shoved back into his seat.⁹ The poisonous atmosphere within Federal Caucus was becoming public.

What could Labor's leaders do? Ben Chifley sought to bind the Party together by a strong emphasis on the decisions of Labor's Conference—a theme of his famous 'political testament'.¹⁰ But on 13 June 1951, Chifley was gone from the labour movement, and from this earth, dead of a heart attack. H. V. Evatt, 'the Doc', was elected unopposed as Leader, while Calwell won the Deputy's position ahead of Clarey (Bendigo, Vic.), Ward and Allan Fraser. Charged with leading the brawling Labor army, the Doc adopted a more peripatetic, mercurial style of leadership than his revered predecessor. Within Evatt's first year, he had led the Labor Party to defeat the Menzies Anti-Communist Referendum, and had incurred the wrath of 'The Movement' newspaper, *News-Weekly*. But the new Leader's quest for political unity and comparative moderation led him back to the right over the next three years.

Those who had strayed from Labor solidarity over the Anti-Communist Bill were forgiven magnanimously. Nationalisation was marginalised for more equivocal, middle-of-the-road policies, such as the expansion of the welfare state. Evatt courted the anti-communist Victorian wing of the Party with selective praise for arbitration instead of industrial militancy and encouragement of land

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The last photograph of Ben Chifley. Taken at the Jubilee Banquet the night before he died, Chifley is pictured with (from left) Eric Costa, ALP Federal President J. A. (Jack) Ferguson, Joe Fitzgerald and another. (Private collection, Daryl Melham)

settlement (which was a hobbyhorse of the leading Catholic intellectual and clandestine chief of 'The Movement', B. A. Santamaria). He supported the Industrial Groups in important union elections, and even consulted with Santamaria. Indeed, figures on the left of the Party were increasingly superfluous, driven to making defiant speeches on the ongoing relevance of Labor's socialist aims.¹¹ Diarist Gil Duthie gave a pained portrait of the cross-currents in Caucus at this time:

We are not temperamentally fit to govern at this stage. We are an army with too many Generals, too much personal ambition, too much selfishness, too many factions, too little belief in our own platform and ideals, too little unity and purpose, too many liberals masquerading under the name of Labor. But Doc's position is nightmarish. Trying to maintain outward unity he compromises, and this leads to indecision.¹²

Buoyed by the economic mismanagement of the Liberal Government, and a string of state electoral successes, the appearance of Labor unity remained until the federal election in 1954. But the Party was again defeated, gaining only 57 of 121 seats, and the bitterness of defeat was spat out in accusations and challenges. Divisions within the Parliamentary Party now became fully public.

Evatt's leadership was openly questioned. The new leader lacked his predecessor's grounding in the traditions of Labor democracy, and he had repeatedly sidestepped the divided machinery established by the movement to control politicians. He was accused of lack of respect for the opinions of Labor comrades when he legally challenged the Communist Party Dissolution Bill; when he prepared the Budget Speech and Senate election campaign of 1953; when he promised abolition of the means test during the 1954 federal elections; and when he made representations to the Royal Commission on Television. All of these initiatives were controversial, but all were embarked upon without consultation. In July 1954 the Federal Executive was driven to complain of lack



*'RIDE HIM, COWBOY'. During 'Doc' Evatt's stormy period as FPLP leader, Eddie Ward and Arthur Calwell (on the fence) were often seen as potential leadership contenders. (Ted Scorfield, **Bulletin**, 14 August 1954; National Library of Australia)*

of attention to its decisions and correspondence and, in August 1954, Evatt was unsuccessfully challenged for the parliamentary leadership by Tom Burke.¹³

The establishment of the Royal Commission into Espionage exacerbated the frustrations and divisions within Caucus. The Commission had been established after the defection of Soviet intelligence operative, Vladimir Petrov. Its first sittings coincided with the last weeks of the election campaign, and it was seen by many Laborites as a political conspiracy against the Party. When two members of Evatt's staff were implicated in the Commission's questionable evidence, Evatt rushed to represent them, but again did so without consultation with colleagues. Divisions over communism and over Evatt's leadership coalesced in Caucus over the next two months. A crisis was building.

A motion supporting Evatt's action could not be carried at the federal Caucus meeting on 25 August, and further conflict was evident when Caucus met on 8 September 1954. Evatt's conduct as counsel at the Petrov Commission fuelled dissatisfaction, and a motion forbidding him from appearing as a counsel, or commenting on the Commission, was put and then withdrawn in Caucus on 22 September 1954. The unstable atmosphere within the Parliamentary Party was magnified by a series of leaks to the media. Three Party meetings during September 1954 raised the problem of Caucus leakages, as rival groupings sought to broadcast their version of recent events.¹⁴ Petrov and Evatt, communism and anti-communism, 'The Movement' and the Labor Party,

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'Doc' Evatt leaving the 1954 Royal Commission into Espionage. On the morning of his first appearance, Evatt sent a telegram to his Caucus colleagues informing them of his decision to act as counsel for two staffers named in evidence. (John Fairfax)

Solidarity and the Press, all became mixed up in an overdetermined and overdue crisis within Caucus.

On 5 October 1954, Evatt responded with a sensational press statement on recent events within the Party. He blamed Labor's 1954 defeat on the disloyalty of 'a small minority of members, located particularly in the State of Victoria'. The secret operations of 'The Movement' were publicly raised, and Evatt called on the Federal Labor Conference to reduce its 'subversive', 'intolerable' influence. The repercussions were immense.¹⁵

Within Caucus, Evatt's leadership was immediately threatened by rumours of a challenge from the Deputy Leader, Arthur Calwell. On 20 October, a special meeting was held to discuss Senator George Cole's (Tas.) motion that all elected offices within the Parliamentary Party be declared vacant. For some members, the most important issue was the role of 'The Movement' in Labor politics. For other members, Evatt's leadership in the 1954 elections dominated, while still other members were more concerned with the rapid loss of Party discipline, and with the propriety of Evatt's attack on fellow parliamentarians. The debate was long, emotional and punctuated by moments of intense vitriol. In scenes of extraordinary bitterness, a division was called, and the motion was defeated by 54 votes to 28.

Evatt retained the leadership, but the Party eventually broke into two fragments. In response to his allegations, the Federal Executive reorganised the Victorian and New South Wales branches of the Party, and a long, complex battle was waged in other states, and at Federal Conference and Executive meetings. The ALP Industrial Groups were disbanded. Those defeated, who

COMPETING LOYALTIES

In the aftermath of the Split, H. V. Evatt faced a series of challenges for the leadership, and battered Labor members were forced to weigh competing loyalties. In the document below, Reg Pollard explains to Eddie Ward why he will not support Ward in the upcoming ballot.

Pollard to Ward, 1 December 1958

I have given a lot of thought to your recent suggestion re leadership problem, but I always come back to the position that the Policy put to the Electors was the case submitted and approved by the *Party* and *Executive*. If this policy failed to find support, then it was no fault of the Leader. In addition I feel that overall Doc preached the policy in a way I could not find fault with. It is my considered opinion that this is the viewpoint of the majority of the Party. The D.L.P. core is well organised and only time can wear it down. In any case, the overall Labor vote was a good one and will I believe improve as the economic position gets worse, as it will. I admit strong leadership will be needed to take advantage of the position but if the Doc desires to continue I feel that for the present I should support him.

In the event of Doc throwing in the sponge then I'll be prepared to have another think.

Another factor that cannot be over-

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Reg Pollard opposed Eddie Ward's leadership aspirations in 1958 because he saw few if any advantages in removing 'Doc' Evatt from the leadership. Following Evatt's retirement in 1960, Pollard was beaten for Leader by Arthur Calwell. (National Library of Australia)

looked is that the cry of the Daily Press here amounts to an endorsement of the D.L.P.'s demand, 'for the removal of Doc Evatt'. I just couldn't be a party to conceding such a Demand—Anyhow Eddie I hope you won't think I am a Ringtail Possum and that I don't appreciate all your sterling qualities or that I am not appreciative of your very apparent good will and opinion of my unworthy self . . . Your mate Reg Pollard.

Sean Scalmer

were associated with 'The Movement', left to form their own, separate political organisation. Seven Victorian members would depart federal Caucus: Mullens, Keon, Bourke, Andrews (Darebin, Vic.), Bryson (Wills, Vic.), Cremean (Hoddle, Vic.) and Joshua (Ballaarat, Vic.). They would later be joined by Senator George Cole (Tas.), and on 27 April 1956, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) would be officially born.

For those who remained within the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, things would never be the same. The Party was traumatised by the Split, and crippled in its aftermath. Morale was understandably low. A legacy of sectarian bitterness lingered in complex and unexpected ways. A new set of more

adventurous foreign policies was emphasised, including support for the self-determination of Asian peoples, and vigorous opposition to atomic weapons. More fundamentally, the relations between politicians and the Party organisation were now remade.

The Federal Executive emerged as a more dominant force in Party affairs. Its intervention into the Victorian and New South Wales branches during the Split heightened centralism within the Party. But the imperative of unity and the distrust of politicians gave the Federal Executive wider powers. For the first time, it took a dominant role in the drafting of Labor's election policies. Public statements by the Executive, and by its leading members—ranging from issues such as bank nationalisation, to Party leadership, and to the appropriate relations between the ALP and the DLP—became more common. In 1957 the Federal Executive led the charge to discipline disloyal critics of Evatt, MHRs Chambers and Johnson. It ensured that a record of attendance was kept for all Caucus meetings, and it became a firmer custodian of both Party unity and ideological purity. After the 1961 Federal Labor Conference, the Federal Executive was empowered to appoint special Standing Committees to keep itself advised on policy, and to submit recommendations to future Conferences.¹⁶ The resources, powers and organisational expectations of the Executive were expanding. In the post-Split ALP it supervised federal members with an increasingly well resourced, vigilant and assertive intent.

Nonetheless, Party unity proved elusive. H. V. Evatt remained a controversial leader, unable to bind Labor members together. He continued to act in erratic and independent ways. Caucus colleagues were not consulted when Evatt wrote to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov in October 1955 to ask about the authenticity of the documents tabled at the Petrov Commission. Neither were they prepared when he offered to resign the leadership in exchange for DLP preferences during the 1958 election, or when he ordered the production of controversial advertisements aimed at Catholic voters during the same campaign. Labor was defeated at federal elections in 1955 and again in 1958 with Evatt at the helm. Arthur Calwell, Allan Fraser and Eddie Ward all challenged him for the leadership over a tumultuous four-year period. Chambers and Johnson publicly agitated for his removal. Only residual loyalty, poor timing, expectations of Evatt's retirement and the manoeuvring of his would-be successors kept him on. He left politics to take up a position as Chief Justice of the New South Wales Supreme Court in 1960, but the stain of suspicion and disunity would remain.

In the following ballot for leadership, Arthur Calwell defeated Reg Pollard by 142 votes to 30, and E. G. Whitlam (Werriwa, NSW) unexpectedly defeated Eddie Ward to become his Deputy. Together they expressed the transitional nature of federal Caucus on the cusp of a new decade—Calwell the Labor stalwart, Roman Catholic, humbly born, well schooled in the traditions of Labor politics for more than 30 years; Whitlam the lawyer, well born and well matched, learned, lucid, Protestant, committed to the renovation of Labor in politics. The pairing worked surprisingly well, at least for its first year, and they collec-

A BITTER LEGACY

The bitterness of the Split, and the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Labor politics, left a lingering legacy for the next decade. Below we survey a surprising manifestation.

Eddie Ward and the deputy leadership

Eddie Ward had opposed 'The Movement' and the Industrial Groups with vehemence. However, when he was defeated for the deputy leadership in 1960, it was rumoured that his Roman Catholic background was the cause. In the passage below, Ward chases down these rumours in a confrontation with a fellow Catholic, Labor's Senate Leader, Nick McKenna. Ward's record of the meeting claims that it occurred in Senator McKenna's office, 8 March 1960, 5.30 pm.

Senator Mr. McKenna admitted that he thought it was a good idea that one of the leading positions in the PLP should be filled by a Protestant. He said this was his political judgement.

Ward—If that is your opinion had you ever thought that this position could be met by your resigning and making way for a Protestant?

McKenna—No. I had never given it a thought.

McKenna said he had only spoken to two or three people on the lines mentioned above.

In the discussion McKenna said it would have been bad for the Party if I had been elected for it would have gone out to the world that the Labor

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Senate Leader Nick McKenna refused to support Eddie Ward's bid for the deputy leadership in 1960. (National Library of Australia)

Party had been recaptured by the Groupers . . .

Ward—Are you serious . . .

McKenna—Yes.

Ward—Are you claiming that I am a Grouper?

McKenna—Oh no . . . But *you are* a R.C.

Sean Scalmer

tively brought a greater vigour and discipline to the federal Caucus. As the economy stalled under Liberal maladministration, elements of the business community and the press moved to support Labor. At the 1961 federal elections the long period of Opposition seemed briefly, tantalisingly, to be at an end. The final result rested on postal votes, and the Liberal Government eventually hung on to power by the most tenuous of margins. Could the sad, bad days for Labor be at an end?

The 1961 elections proved a false dawn. Three sources of disunity lingered on from the Split into the next decade. First, the newly formed DLP distributed its preferences away from the ALP at successive elections. This not only made electoral progress difficult, it also inspired a number of vacillating, unsuccessful attempts towards rapprochement with the dissidents. Rumours of such negotiations swept the ALP over 1960, 1961 and 1965, and thereby provided a persistent source of conflict, countermobilisation and division within Labor's ranks.¹⁷ Even from outside the Party, strongly anti-communist, ex-Labor members could divide the ALP.

Second, the new decisions reached by Labor at the 1955 Conference also divided the Labor Party. With the disbandment of the Industrial Groups, the issue of cooperation with communists in union elections in so-called 'unity tickets' became prominent and divisive. Other new questions also divided Labor in the 1960s, such as the issue of State Aid to Catholic school education, and the form and intensity of Labor's opposition to nuclear weapons. These new issues proved to be the source of persistent ideological conflict.

Third, tensions within the Party organisation also prevented the ALP from regaining its former unity and appeal. The reformed Victorian branch of the ALP proved electorally unsuccessful, and was frequently accused of both unionist dominance and communist penetration. Trade unionists and Labor stalwarts in the branches throughout Australia seemed less likely to trust their parliamentary delegates. Electoral considerations paled after such a long period of Opposition. Moral virtue, principle and the balance of forces within the union movement dominated the calculations of many rank-and-filers. On such criteria, the actions and dispositions of Labor members often failed to measure up. When the Labor Caucus supported a substantial pay rise for parliamentarians there was outrage in the branches, the threat of disaffiliation from the unions, and protest resignations on the Federal Executive.¹⁸ Labor remained a divided house.

These ongoing tensions provoked another crisis for Labor in 1963. The Menzies Government had agreed that a United States base would be constructed at North-West Cape in Western Australia, and Labor was required to formulate its own policy on the issue. Party Conferences had strongly emphasised opposition to atomic weapons, and the base was widely (and correctly) seen as a supporting cog in the American nuclear machine. However, federal Caucus had been seriously divided on issues such as nuclear testing and disarmament in the recent past, and Party leaders were anxious to give the base qualified support. As a result, Arthur Calwell successfully had the issue forwarded to a Special Party Conference, where it was narrowly agreed, by a margin of 19 to 17 votes, not to oppose the base.

From a detached perspective, this could be seen as a sagacious political performance on Calwell's part. Party unity was safeguarded, divisions within the Parliamentary Party were occluded, and his desired stance on the issue was accepted. Unlike Evatt, Calwell had negotiated a controversial policy without alienating his parliamentary colleagues or disrespecting Labor's decision-making. However, as Calwell and Whitlam waited on the decision of Conference outside the Hotel Kingston, they were snapped by a photographer from the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. Deference to Conference was portrayed as timidity

THIRTY-SIX FACELESS MEN

In 1963, a press report of a Labor Conference meeting fostered the impression that Labor parliamentarians were dictated to by outside forces. The image haunted Labor and promoted the cause of Party change. The report is partially reproduced below:

CALWELL AND WHITLAM WAIT FOR DECISION
OF 'THIRTY-SIX FACELESS MEN'

The pictorial record opposite—Mr. Arthur Calwell's night watch—is a sad commentary on the decline in status of Labor's parliamentary leadership.

It shows Mr. Calwell and his deputy Mr. Whitlam, waiting in the midnight darkness outside Canberra's Kingston Hotel yesterday.

Inside the hotel, 36 virtually unknown men—delegates to the A.L.P. Federal Conference—were deciding a question of international importance.

Daily Telegraph, 22 March 1963, pp. 4–5

Sean Scalmer

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One of the series of photographs which led to the '36 faceless men' tag. FPLP leader Arthur Calwell (right), his deputy Gough Whitlam (centre) and Frank Waters from Queensland stand outside Canberra's Hotel Kingston while the Special Federal Conference decides Party policy. (News Limited)

and cowardice on the Leader's part. Labor Conference became 'the 36 faceless men'. In the following election Menzies exploited the demonisation of Labor's internal structures, wooed Catholic voters with generous State Aid, and profited from the economic recovery. Voters swung back to the Coalition; Labor's numbers in the House of Representatives fell to 50 seats; and a new battle over the nature of Labor's decision-making began to develop.

The battle over how Labor policy was formed dominated the labour movement for the next half-decade. The form and the ground of this conflict was an outgrowth of the earlier battles for control of the labour movement in the 1950s. After organisational conflict and the growing distrust of politicians, Labor members of Parliament were now less likely to sit on Federal Executive or Conference. As a result, these bodies could be portrayed as less 'public' and more 'faceless' by Labor's enemies. Equally, the power of the Federal Executive had increased after the Split, and a wary Party Leader was now more likely to refer matters to this body than in the past. Dissidents within the Party had learnt the power of selective 'leaks' to the media in the middle 1950s, and a younger cohort of members had joined the federal Caucus after the 1961 elections. Persistent defeat amid economic and social change had convinced many of Labor's opponents, and some of its supporters, that the Party was

old-fashioned, and required renovation. As a result, an escalating campaign to alter the Party's democratic machinery began to develop.

Labor's newly appointed Federal Secretary, Cyril Wyndham, joined with Deputy Leader Gough Whitlam to lead the drive for change. The key priorities were to increase the prominence of Labor parliamentarians on Federal Conference and Executive; to counter the notion that Labor was union-dominated; to harness expert advice in order to develop more detailed policies for future Labor government; and to increase the efficiency and silence of Labor's political machine. However, as had happened earlier in the post-war period, these strategic aims became mixed up in an increasingly bitter personal conflict, this time involving Whitlam and Calwell.

Calwell's continued desire to lead the Party, and his guarded defence of Labor's traditional decision-making, saw him cast by opponents and by the Australian press as an old-fashioned and bumbling figure. This impression was heightened when Calwell campaigned strongly against the conscription of Australian youth for the Vietnam War, using evocative, intemperate and often anachronistic language. Whitlam, in stark comparison, was consistently portrayed as a modern figure, capable of appealing to younger voters, unimpressed with Labor tradition, and keen to rise as the parliamentary Leader and unquestioned head of the movement. Neither portrait did justice to the partisans, but as they manoeuvred to lead the Party into the next election, so they came to personify rival visions of Labor: Calwell vs Whitlam, Tradition vs Modernity.

Neither flourished. Despite strong support from the media and an eventual challenge in April 1966, Whitlam was unable to secure the leadership before the elections later in the year. Calwell survived as leader, but was unable to inspire electors to his principled stand against conscription and the Vietnam War, or to heal the breach with Whitlamite Party modernisers. Labor garnered a meagre 39.98 per cent of the vote, giving the Coalition Government twice as many seats in the House of Representatives as Labor in the 1966 poll.

Despite the personal and electoral defeats, there were signs of Party change and rebirth over the mid-1960s. Caucus began to reassert itself. It stimulated the push for Party reform on 18 March 1964, when a motion that solicited the suggestions of Caucus members concerning Labor's decision-making was decisively passed. Those recommendations were eventually forwarded to the Federal Executive, and widely credited with establishing the momentum for a full inquiry into Labor's structure. In May 1965, Caucus also decided to establish a Shadow Ministry, so as to mirror the structure of government and heighten preparations for executive power. Certainly, divisions remained on policy issues such as State Aid and Vietnam, on organisational issues such as the need for Party change and methods of voting inside Caucus, and on personal issues, like the scramble for membership of the Parliamentary Party's policy committees, and the battle for occupancy of Labor's highest parliamentary office. However, on the whole, Caucus showed greater ability to manage conflict, and it avoided the 'internal explosions' that many media outlets predicted over 1965 and 1966.¹⁹ There were to be no further splits.

Wider changes were also evident. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Party were invited to attend both Federal Executive and

PAT KENNELLY, NUMBERS MAN

Patrick J. ('Pat') Kennelly is remembered as the great 'fixer' of the early post-war period. His bull-neck, block-like head and prominent Irish nose were present at Victorian Labor Conferences since the 1920s. His stammering voice and blunt wit animated factional battles for more than four decades. Kennelly's famous political philosophy has become both a symbol of corruption for Labor critics, and of hard-headed realism for admirers: 'It's always best to have the logic and the numbers, but if you can't have both, then give me the numbers any day.'

Certainly, Kennelly's zig-zagging interventions do not immediately suggest firm principle and lofty idealism. He battled the Industrial Groupers and clashed with Evatt in the early 1950s. Yet he was Evatt's organisational ally, assiduous leaker and reported hatchet-man in the battle around the Labor Split. Having successfully marginalised the Groupers in the 1950s, he then promoted the cause of reconciliation with the DLP in the 1960s. He allied with Calwell in Caucus in the mid-1950s, as each garnered the position of Deputy Leader in Senate and House. Yet he supported Whitlam in his bid for the deputy leadership in 1960, and reportedly urged Calwell to step down in 1965.

Still, Kennelly's own actions sometimes defied this facile practicality. His idiosyncratic commitment to Melbourne's most treasured public space saw him dubbed as the 'bushranger of Albert Park'. He risked and lost his position as Federal Secretary of the Party in his battle with the Groupers. He was supplanted from the Victorian Central Executive after urging reconciliation with the Democratic Labor Party. Machiavellianism was conjoined with solidarity; compromise with commitment. Kennelly was a *Labor* numbers man, and his organisational skills were exercised within the movement. His long career in

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Pat Kennelly, Victorian senator from 1953 to 1971, played a key role as a numbers man and organiser during the FPLP's long period in opposition. (News Limited)

Federal Parliament, from 1953 to 1971, was spent entirely in Opposition.

In Kennelly's wasted efforts and distance from government, the tragedy of this era in Labor parliamentarism is symbolised. And yet Kennelly himself personifies the complexity of Labor in the 1950s and '60s, and the unjust historical condescension with which this period is usually viewed. He was an organiser, but never a 'faceless man'; a vigorous participant in Party battles, but never a grudge-nurser; a product of a now past Party culture, but never an anachronism. His virtuosity as a political 'fixer' was never put in the service of political interests outside the Party and, for all his adroitness, the mastery of the conservatives was always beyond him.

Sean Scalmer

Federal Conference meetings as *ex officio* members, thus countering the ‘faceless men’ stigma. The composition of the Federal Executive’s Standing Committees were also altered, so that the Leader and the Deputy Leader were now automatically *ex officio* members of all committees, and the federal Caucus was empowered to elect one member to each committee. As these committees swung into action, a raft of new policies was passed at the 1965 Federal Labor Conference in the fields of health, housing, transport, immigration, broadcasting, foreign affairs, welfare, Aboriginal affairs and national development, providing an impressive base for the work of future Labor governments. Party Secretary Cyril Wyndham produced a report proposing renovation of the ALP that would eventually bear fruit at the 1967 Federal Conference. After a bitter dispute between Whitlam and members of the Federal Executive, a new and less divisive policy on ‘State Aid’ for education was formed.²⁰ Amidst hoots of derision and accusations of irrelevancy, Labor was regrouping, reorganising and fighting for change.

Of course, this was not a period of triumph. In seventeen years, few legislative monuments, social advances or collective victories had been garnered. It was a bitter, heart-rending time in which to be a Labor member or supporter. The economy was in a long boom, but Labor was unable to grasp this opportunity to challenge persistent disadvantage, or to remake Australia as a more democratic, peaceful and equal place. Potentials were wasted, careers unmade, friendships sundered. But this was not a moment as dark or as simply hopeless as has been recalled. Labor came close to electoral victory in 1954 and 1961. Repeatedly it challenged the direction and tenor of the Liberal Government’s policies. The Party remained disunited, but the causes of disunity shifted, as reactions to past conflicts produced new, unforeseen and unexpected battles. The Sisyphean task of representing labour in a hostile, unequal and capitalist parliamentary system seemed never more fraught nor more urgent, as the Labor family turned to face the new challenges of 1967.

CAUCUS UNDER WHITLAM: 1967–75

Paul Kelly

On 8 February 1967 the Caucus exerted its ultimate power and elected a new Leader, Edward Gough Whitlam. The Whitlam leadership would herald eleven years of turmoil, triumph and repudiation for the Labor Party. This would be an era of transformation in which the fortunes of the Parliamentary Party were irrevocably bound to Whitlam's ambition and vision.

In the ballot Whitlam polled 32 first preference votes followed by Jim Cairns (Yarra, Vic.) with 15, Frank Crean (Melbourne Ports, Vic.) 12, Fred Daly (Grayndler, NSW) 6 and Kim Beazley Snr with 3 votes. After the elimination of Beazley and Daly, Whitlam won with 39 votes against 29 for Cairns and Crean. Having been elected Leader of a divided Caucus, Whitlam had the good fortune to see his lieutenant, Lance Barnard (Bass, Tas.), prevail 35 to 33 against Cairns for the deputy leadership. The Whitlam–Barnard partnership was sealed. Barnard's career was a model as a 'loyal deputy', except that in his case this description became not a cliché but the literal truth.¹

The Caucus that elected Whitlam was old, fragmented and weak. It was the parliamentary remnant of a party whose malaise was profound. After seventeen years in Opposition Labor had suffered an abject defeat at the 1966 election. Whitlam's first statement as Leader was a warning that the future of the ALP as a parliamentary force 'capable of governing and actually governing' was at risk.² Whitlam inherited a Party in a state of gridlock over ideology, structure and power. He prevailed, eventually, with a reform program for the Party that was instrumental in Labor's return to office in 1972 after its longest exile. The Whitlam reforms involved Party structure, policy and a new image for the ALP.

This was a time of change for the Labor Party and such changes were reflected in the nature, outlook and operations of the FPLP.

There were three great forces reshaping the ALP Caucus in the Whitlam era. The first was a transformation in the profile of the Labor politician. The socioeconomic background of the Caucus diversified as a new echelon of tertiary-educated, often middle-class warriors joined their more traditional working-class and trade union colleagues. This was a defining event for the Caucus, for Labor's self-image and in determining who became an ALP voter. The symbol of this change was Whitlam himself—a sleek, tertiary-educated, middle-class lawyer with a penchant for interpreting politics as a mass tutorial session. This social realignment was highlighted at the 1969 election. Two-fifths of the ALP's new faces had a professional background and more than a third were university educated.³ The 1969 poll did not just change the psychology of the Caucus; it changed the character of the Caucus.

Any political reporter on patrol in King's Hall in 1969 could witness Labor's evolving order. Recently elected medical doctors—Richie Gun (Kingston, SA), Moss Cass (Maribyrnong, Vic.), Dick Klugman (Prospect, NSW) and Doug Everingham (Capricornia, Qld); diplomat Bill Morrison (St George, NSW); accountant Chris Hurford (Adelaide, SA); solicitor Lionel Bowen (Kingsford-Smith, NSW); pharmacist Joe Berinson (Perth, WA); and economist Rex Patterson (Dawson, Qld) joined with union and working-class veterans such as Tom Uren (Reid, NSW), Clyde Cameron (Hindmarsh, SA), Fred Daly, Charlie Jones (Newcastle, NSW), Reg Bishop (Senator, SA) and Rex Connor (Cunningham, NSW). The synthesis was not without tension but Labor managed it successfully. It helped to broaden Labor's political appeal. It also reflected new political forces—the growth of white-collar trade unionism, the attraction to the ALP of a new tertiary-educated generation and the emergence of social issues encompassing civil liberties, the 'quality of life', feminism and better service delivery in education, health and welfare. Under Whitlam the Caucus was deeply involved in this new policy agenda.

The second change arose from Whitlam's structural reforms, which were designed to elevate the power and prestige of the FPLP. In 1967 the veteran political journalist Alan Reid described the Caucus as 'a relatively unimportant power point'.⁴ The Party was dominated by its organisational machinery, which was the preserve of mostly paid Party officials, unrepresentative of, and unresponsive to, the rank and file. The propaganda of the Liberal Prime Minister, R. G. Menzies, and especially his 'thirty-six faceless men' slogan, had made organisational reform a necessity. The subordination of the Caucus and the parliamentary leaders was symbolised in 1963 when the Party Leader, Arthur Calwell, and Whitlam, his Deputy, were photographed outside Canberra's Kingston Hotel while inside the 36-strong Federal Conference decided ALP policy towards the North-West Cape communications base. This humiliation left its imprint upon Whitlam. He came as Leader to resurrect the credentials of the parliamentary leadership within the Party and the community.

In 1967 the Party's supreme policy-making body, the Federal Conference, was expanded to include the four federal parliamentary leaders and each state leader. The Federal Executive was also expanded by adding the four federal

leaders.⁵ The changes became a turning point in the character of these Party organs since it embedded parliamentary representation in their structure. Whitlam's adviser, Graham Freudenberg, concluded that 'This was to prove a decisive shift in the balance of power towards the parliamentary group and away from paid officials'.⁶ The principle behind Whitlam's reforms was that Labor achieved power and realised its program through its parliamentary wing.

The third great change was the application of the Caucus system to the reality of government. It was the preparation for power and then the experience of government that provided the unifying theme in the story of the Caucus from 1967 to 1975. The return of federal Labor to office after 23 years in the wilderness inevitably meant that a spotlight would be thrown upon the operation of the Caucus. The scrutiny was all the more intense because Labor's exile meant there was only a poor public grasp of the Caucus system, so central to the operation of an ALP government.

There was also a deeper issue at stake, given Labor's recent history. This was the Party's ability to reconcile the principle and operation of Caucus sovereignty with effective Cabinet government in the demanding circumstances of the 1970s. For Party insiders, the Scullin years still cast a long shadow over the FPLP's capacity to handle the responsibility of the Treasury benches. Caucus as 'a sovereign band of equals' was a principle pivotal to Labor's conception of democracy.⁷ According to this precept, the backbencher met the leader in Caucus as an equal. Furthermore, the parliamentary leadership and the ministry were responsible to the Caucus, and Caucus exercised the ultimate discretion over how the FPLP voted in Parliament.

The first decision Whitlam made as leader was designed to bring the Caucus into line with the demands of ministerial power. He apportioned shadow portfolios to the Labor frontbench as elected by the Caucus. This had two consequences—it increased the leader's authority, since he had shadow portfolios to bestow, and it promoted Party discipline since it meant that each portfolio had only one shadow minister and not a dozen.⁸ The system has prevailed ever since.

During the Opposition years there was a familiar cycle in Caucus meetings, held weekly when the Parliament was in session. A meeting began around 10.30 am and ran until lunchtime. Whitlam, as Party Leader, served as chairman. The deliberations were dominated by parliamentary business and procedures. The main agenda items were designed to finalise Labor's position on government Bills, parliamentary motions, tactics, questions to the leaders, motions from the floor and ballots for a range of committees or overseas delegations. After Caucus broke, Whitlam would brief the media on the decisions, aware that journalists had their own Party room sources.

In the 1967–69 Parliament Labor was consumed with the Vietnam War, State Aid and factional power. Whitlam's campaign for modernisation was resisted by the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Left, particularly in Victoria, whose State Executive was his principal target. Caucus mirrored this battle, although it was rarely the main field of combat. Within the Caucus two of the most influential figures from the Left—Jim Cairns and ALP Senate leader, Lionel Murphy (NSW)—were Whitlam's principal opponents. The Caucus, however,

GOUGH WHITLAM'S CAUCUS

When R. G. Menzies appropriated 'the thirty-six faceless men' to describe the 1963 Special Federal Conference, he struck a devastating blow against us. Yet, in one of those great paradoxes which occur so often in Australian politics, he contributed to achieving the objective I set on becoming Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party on 8 February 1967: to restore the credibility and effectiveness of the Parliamentary Party within a reformed Party organisation. I use the word 'restore' to emphasise that it was never part of my aspirations for the Caucus that we should supplant the Conference. I wanted each of them to become more effective by becoming more representative. My starting point, however, was that, from the foundation of the Party, the Labor movement had made a fundamental commitment to achieving power through Parliament; accordingly, the Parliamentary Party would always bear the main brunt of any loss of public confidence through the misconduct of any of the Party's constituent parts, including federal and state executives. Caucus credibility is the indispensable condition for the Party's electability to government. All my efforts towards Party reform must be judged in the light of those propositions.

The April 1963 Special Conference itself illustrates the point. At issue was the Party's position on the legislation to establish the US communications base at North-West Cape. The Caucus was perfectly competent under Party rules to determine its attitude. To avoid divisions within Caucus, my predecessor chose to refer the matter to the Federal Executive, which in turn called a Special Conference. The parliamentary leadership was excluded from both these organs. (In fact Arthur Calwell and I did substantially shape the Conference decision to accept the base but to renegotiate the terms with the US government. My government did so ten years later.) As a result of Menzies' skilful

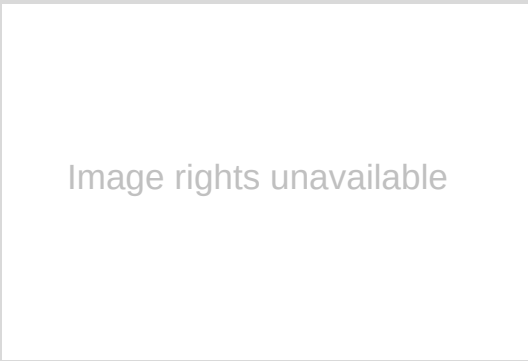


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Gough Whitlam chairing a Caucus meeting. 'Supporting me, I have the best of colleagues and the best of friends.' (*Canberra Times*)

exploitation of our humiliation in 1963, it was agreed that henceforth the parliamentary Leader and the Deputy could attend Federal Conferences and Executive meetings and could speak but not vote. The 'faceless men' jibe dogged us, however, until the 1967 Federal Conference in Adelaide made the Leader and Deputy Leader in the House of Representatives and the Leader and Deputy Leader in the Senate full delegates to the Federal Executive and Federal Conference, and the leaders of the State Parliamentary Parties delegates to the Federal Conference.

Before 1967, Caucus had no 'Shadow Cabinet'. Caucus wasted the talents and experience of its own members and weakened its performance in Parliament because members of the Parliamentary Executive had no defined responsibilities. There were many self-appointed spokesmen on foreign affairs; few sustained an interest in more mundane matters like housing, health or even social services. It was almost as if the enormous factional energies expended in Executive elections exhausted every other effort. My first reform on becoming Leader was to establish the system of shadow ministries within the Parliamentary Executive. After

December 1972, the most effective Ministers were those who had worked hardest in their portfolios as Opposition spokesmen.

My chief comrade-in-arms in Caucus was always Lance Barnard. He brought to our long partnership an instinctive feel for the moods, sensitivities and capabilities of Caucus. When I first entered Caucus in 1953, and when in 1954 Lance won the seat of Bass which his father Claude, one of Chifley's ministers, had lost in 1949, neither of us could have foreseen the long, arduous and turbulent road ahead. Until our arrival Caucus contained more returned men from the Boer War than from World War II. Lance was the first colleague in Caucus to offer me support in a leadership role. At the Armistice Day service in Canberra on 11 November 1959, he quietly mentioned to me that I should contest the Deputy Leadership, likely to become vacant in the New Year. His support then, and at every stage over the next fifteen years, was crucial. The Caucus elected at the double dissolution elections on 18 May 1974 chose to replace him as Deputy

Prime Minister. It was the most unfair and unwise decision Caucus ever made in my time.

The Caucus produced by our successes at the House of Representatives election in October 1969 was one of the strongest and most effective in the Party's history. It was able to build on the work of the reformed Federal Conference of July 1969 to refine the policies we presented to the people at the 'It's Time' election on 2 December 1972. In the policy speech I said:

For thirteen years, I have striven to make the policies of the Australian Labor Party, its machinery, its membership, more representative of the Australian people and more responsive to their needs and hopes. Supporting me, I have the best of colleagues and the best of friends.

I see no need to revise that assessment of the Caucus which made me Prime Minister of Australia.

Gough Whitlam

became critical as a result of Whitlam's April 1968 decision to resign and recontest the leadership after a series of defeats at the hands of Federal Executive. His aim was to strengthen support for his campaign to reform the Victorian Executive. In a letter to Caucus members, Whitlam made clear that he wanted a mandate to renew this campaign. He was opposed by the leader of the Victorian Left, Jim Cairns, who, in a letter to Caucus members, said the issue was: 'Whose party is this—ours or his?'

Whitlam's tactic was devised in collaboration with Lance Barnard. Barnard remained loyal to Whitlam and declined to offer himself as a compromise candidate. Cairns would not have run had Barnard nominated and it is likely that, in this situation, Barnard would have become Leader.⁹ In the Party room on 30 April, Barnard took the chair and ruled that the only issue before the Caucus was the leadership, not the reform issue canvassed in Whitlam's letter. Whitlam was re-elected over Cairns but the result was close—38 to 32. The tactic proved to be of dubious value, yet the principle upon which Whitlam acted was important—a Caucus renewal of his leader's mandate would strengthen his hand in reforming the Party.¹⁰ The more important validation of Whitlam's leadership was the 1969 election, which saw the biggest post-war swing to an Opposition party. This introduced a newer generation into the Caucus, less interested in

the old battles and hungry for office. Between 1969 and 1972 the FPLP was shaped by the preparation for power and a weakening of factional divide.

Two far-reaching debates were conducted after the appointment in April 1970 of a Caucus Procedures Committee to review the Caucus rules and standing orders.¹¹ On 19 April 1972 the Caucus voted 34 to 33 to follow the Party tradition that all ministers sit in the Cabinet. This upheld the system under Chifley when Labor had last governed. It narrowly rejected the two-tier system introduced by Menzies in 1956 of an inner Cabinet and outer ministry. Whitlam wanted Labor to replicate the inner–outer ministry model and argued that a Cabinet of the entire ministry would be unworkable.¹² In retrospect, this vote was fateful. The 27-man Cabinet constituted possibly the gravest structural defect in the Whitlam government.

On 11 October 1972 the Caucus approved new rules and standing orders based upon the review by the Procedures Committee. They provided the formal skeleton upon which the Party room operated during the Whitlam Government. The roles of Party leader and Caucus Chairman were separated, a critical change. After the December 1972 victory, Senator Bill Brown (Vic.), was elected Caucus Chairman, a role he discharged with diligence.¹³ The key change was the creation of a Caucus committee system designed to ‘reflect the structure of the ministry’. A crucial provision was that ‘Every proposal submitted by any Minister to the Ministry, other than a proposal which by its nature must be confidential, also shall be submitted to the relevant committee . . .’. This meant the committees not only ‘shadowed’ the ministry but also imposed a Party room obligation upon ministers to bring Cabinet proposals to the relevant Caucus committee.¹⁴ The decision led over time to a robust Caucus committee system with the potential for real influence.¹⁵ On 28 February 1973 the Caucus endorsed a motion from Senator Harry Cant (WA) to establish ten Caucus committees, reduced to eight after the 1974 election.¹⁶ The Party recognised that the more complex demands of policy meant that Caucus sovereignty had to be realised through new tools of dialogue in order to influence government decisions.

The Caucus did not specify how many ministers should comprise the next Labor government. But the McMahon Government had 27 ministers and it was hardly a realistic option for Whitlam to reduce this number when Labor came to power. The result was that by August 1972 ‘an implicit contractual arrangement had been established between Caucus and Party leader that the Ministry would consist of 27 Ministers’.¹⁷ The final effort to limit Whitlam’s discretion in relation to the ministry was mounted in Caucus by Senator Jim McClelland (NSW) in August 1972. He proposed that a five-man committee of the Leader, the Senate Leader and three members to be elected by Caucus should determine the number, designation and responsibilities of ministers, including reshuffles in office. Whitlam said such a system would destroy public confidence in the Leader. This radical motion was supported by both Cairns and Murphy but was lost on the voices. Whitlam, as a trade-off, promised to consult the other leaders in the allocation of portfolios.¹⁸

After the December 1972 victory, Whitlam revealed a penchant for drama and action that would challenge the Caucus. It was the first time since 1929 that a new Labor government had been formed as a result of an election; but

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The Whitlam leadership team. Left to right: Lance Barnard (Deputy Leader), Gough Whitlam, Lionel Murphy (Senate Leader) and Don Willesee (Deputy Senate Leader). (Canberra Times)

there was a delay of sixteen days between the 2 December victory and the final results necessary to permit the Caucus to meet on 18 December to elect the ministry. Whitlam exploited this delay to establish a two-man Whitlam–Barnard ministry for a fortnight to implement a series of ALP policies. It was a success that bordered on the euphoric. But the ‘duumvirate’ created false hopes about the ease of political change and blinded the public to Labor’s need for consultative decision-making.

Power was the ultimate test for the Caucus system. Labor had inherited the Cabinet room, the Treasury benches, the ministerial offices, the public service and the attention of the media and every interest group. The Caucus, inevitably, was a lesser priority. Whitlam made few concessions to it. He translated to the Party room the advocacy he applied in Parliament—unlike Chifley or Curtin, for whom Caucus management was a political art.¹⁹ The journalist Allan Barnes described the Whitlam technique thus: ‘Instead of winning them by persuasion, [Whitlam] tries to intimidate . . . Sometimes he gets away with it. On several occasions he has been rebuffed.’²⁰ Graham Freudenberg surely echoed his leader when he remarked: ‘This blessed word “consultation”, you know, everyone seems to think they should be consulted all the time.’²¹ After his victory Whitlam decided to hold a weekly press conference on Tuesdays, when he announced Cabinet decisions. This was the day before Caucus had to approve them, an unmistakable sign of priorities: the media before Caucus. Whitlam was an impatient man with a sense of destiny. He rarely allowed policy to be obscured by politics. His career was based on merit and logic, not Labor tribalism or factional solidarity. He described his approach as ‘crash through or crash’ and it was an approach that guaranteed tension with a less ambitious backbench which he once scorned as consisting of ‘nervous nellies’. The implication was that the Party should follow him.²²

In May 1973 Caucus Chairman, Senator Brown, advised on procedures for Caucus–Cabinet relations and the Party room endorsed them.²³ Ministers were

to refer proposed legislation to the relevant Caucus committee, and its views would inform the minister and the Cabinet. The subsequent Cabinet decision would be referred back to the Party room for approval. The full Caucus was sovereign. Despite the tensions between Whitlam and the Party, the Leader never questioned this principle. He began with the optimistic assumption that Caucus would never be likely to overrule Cabinet. When it did, he shifted his position to support the principle but highlight the infrequency of its application. Asked in December 1973 whether he supported the principle of Caucus reviewing Cabinet decisions, Whitlam said: 'Of course. I not only support it. I advocate it.'²⁴ Yet there was another principle Whitlam invoked—that ministers defeated in Cabinet should not use Caucus as a court of appeal. He expected ministers to maintain Cabinet solidarity in Caucus, and was angry when they did not. As a safeguard he maintained that ministers had an obligation to inform the Cabinet when they intended to take a matter to the Caucus.²⁵

The first rejection of a Cabinet decision came in May 1973 when Caucus voted to limit Commonwealth support for wheat prices. On a series of further issues—Lake Pedder, the prices and incomes referendum, Medibank, interest rates and tariffs—Whitlam and the Caucus tested their authority.²⁶ The Tasmanian government's flooding of Lake Pedder as part of a hydro-electric project had become a national cause for the environmental movement, and the Whitlam Government implemented its election commitment to conduct an inquiry into the action. The report canvassed the draining of the Lake at substantial cost. As Minister for the Environment and Conservation, Moss Cass took the report to his relevant Caucus committee, which endorsed this proposal. Cabinet declined to adopt it on the grounds of cost and impracticality. The issue came to Caucus in October 1973 when a backbencher, Race Mathews (Casey, Vic.), moved an amendment to Cabinet's decision. It was carried 43–34. The resolution had no impact since Tasmania would not co-operate, but the Caucus had asserted its environmental sympathy.²⁷

In September 1973 Caucus amended a proposal from Whitlam for a series of constitutional referenda to include a proposal that would give the Commonwealth power over prices. This was resisted by Whitlam, and was neither in the 1972 policy speech nor in the ALP Platform. It was a poorly considered decision since it triggered a response from the Opposition-controlled Senate for a concurrent referendum for power over incomes. Whitlam eventually persuaded the Caucus there had to be an incomes and a prices referendum. But both referenda were defeated and the trade union movement split from the government to campaign against the incomes proposal. This was a failed Caucus initiative, which damaged the government, forced Whitlam into a series of political contortions and strained ties with the ACTU.²⁸

Ministers varied in their commitment to the Caucus but the Minister for Social Security, Bill Hayden (Oxley, Qld), offered a copybook approach. He consulted the relevant Caucus committee at length about his Health Insurance White Paper, the foundation for Medibank, which was one of Labor's key reforms. Hayden subsequently spent an entire Caucus meeting dealing with the document clause by clause—the Caucus Minutes indicate that this was the most detailed examination made by the Party room of any policy during the Whitlam

ministry. It illustrates ministerial use of the Caucus system as a self-protective device before embarking upon a long and difficult battle within the community and the Parliament to establish Medibank.²⁹

On 9 September three ministers—Whitlam, Barnard and Treasurer Frank Crean—revalued the dollar and agreed that the Reserve Bank would lift interest rates to contain inflation. This was a direct response to economic policy advice and showed Whitlam's reluctance to put monetary policy before the full Cabinet. The decision was a harbinger of the stagflation crisis of the 1970s. There was an adverse political reaction and a minister, Gordon Bryant (Wills, Vic.), asked for Caucus consideration of interest rates.³⁰ In Caucus on 12 September, Paul Keating (Blaxland, NSW) moved to compel the banks to exempt home mortgages from the higher rates. Crean opposed the motion. Whitlam, sensing the motion had majority support, successfully referred it to the Caucus economics committee.³¹ The committee instructed Crean to investigate how low income earners could be exempted, but the Cabinet failed to do so. The conclusion is that while Caucus had intervened in monetary policy, it failed to find a method to achieve its goal.³²

The most dramatic confrontation in 1973 occurred over tariff policy, an area close to Whitlam's heart. The trigger was the Industry Assistance Commission report on colour televisions. Whitlam, aware of backbench sensitivity towards cuts in protection, insisted that the correct procedure was for a Cabinet decision before the report was exposed to the Party room. This eliminated the Caucus from decision-making. The proposal of Ted Innes (Melbourne, Vic.)—that the Caucus economics committee examine the report before Cabinet—provoked Whitlam's anger. Questioned in Parliament, he launched a pre-emptive strike: 'If my Party were to purport to rule that Tariff Board reports were to be seen before the Cabinet decision was made or announced I would surrender the commission I have to form a government.'³³ Whitlam's overkill achieved his aim but he conceded the technical point that Caucus always had the power to alter tariff decisions after they were taken by Cabinet. Over time he relaxed his stand and by 1975 Caucus was heavily involved in decisions on car industry protection.

The Autumn 1974 session was dominated by political dramas that produced the May 1974 double dissolution and Labor's narrow re-election. The post-election Caucus meeting on 10 June was notable for two events—the election of Cairns as Deputy Leader over Barnard and the re-election en masse of the existing ministry (except for Al Grassby [Riverina, NSW], who lost his seat). But the re-elected Whitlam Government now had to deal with a deteriorating economy. The Cabinet split quickly and openly, and the Caucus, caught between a declining electoral position and a divided Cabinet, was more prepared to challenge the Cabinet. Members were anxious as unemployment and inflation increased and public opinion turned hostile.

The most dangerous flashpoint occurred at a special Caucus meeting at 7.30 pm on 23 July 1974 to approve a mini-budget over which the Cabinet

had been bitterly divided. Treasurer Crean put to Caucus the remnants of an economic package which the Treasury had originally devised as a short, sharp, anti-inflation shock. Amendments were moved by Senator Jim McClelland and Senator Arthur Gietzelt (NSW). The key proposal was to remove from the package, which Crean was scheduled to announce in Parliament at 8 pm, higher postal charges, the deferment of the abolition of the means test on pensions and the postponement of the child care program. The Caucus was still voting as the parliamentary bells rang to summon MPs to hear Crean's speech. The amendment was defeated 40 to 35 and the meeting broke in rancour at 8.03 pm. Some ministers voted for the amendment. The Opposition Leader and Press Gallery had already been given the text, so the Caucus vote narrowly averted a humiliation for Whitlam and Crean.³⁴ The core problem lay not so much with the Caucus but with Cabinet, whose divisions meant there had been no prior dialogue with the backbench.

At a Party meeting the next morning the Caucus Chairman, Senator Brown, said that:

I left the Caucus meeting last night extremely concerned and distressed . . . There have been numerous decisions made and announced by Cabinet which have had the effect of pre-empting the proper legislative functions and decision-making power of the Caucus . . . I do not concede the Cabinet is a group of members commissioned to act independently of the FLP as a whole.

A proposal from a minister, Senator Reg Bishop, that Brown's statement not be recorded was defeated.³⁵

At the same meeting Whitlam defied his own declared principle and, backed by Cairns and Hayden, asked Caucus to overturn a Cabinet decision. Whitlam had been angered by Cabinet's decision by 15 votes to 11 to give parliamentarians a \$5500 pay rise at a time when ministers were appealing for wage restraint. The decisive advocate in Caucus of the pay rise was the Leader of the House, Fred Daly, who said there was never a good time for a politicians' pay rise. He had strong backing from Lionel Bowen, a minister. Whitlam was rebuffed by Caucus, 51 to 40.³⁶

Within days there was another clash over the decision by senior ministers to abolish the \$28 million petrol price subsidy scheme, which cut petrol prices in rural Australia. The decision was part of the anti-inflation drive and had been announced by Whitlam. The Attorney-General, Senator Murphy, told the Caucus on 31 July that he had not yet signed the papers and did not support the decision. The upshot was a special Caucus meeting the same evening to settle the issue. At this meeting opposition to the abolition of the subsidy was mounted by the Minister for Northern Development, Rex Patterson, and backbenchers John FitzPatrick (Darling, NSW), Fred Collard (Kalgoorlie, WA), Tony Luchetti (Macquarie, NSW), Len Keogh (Bowman, Qld) and Senators George Poyser (Vic.) and George Georges (Qld). They argued that seats would be lost and the government would be weakened in the bush. Whitlam, facing a rebuff over a decision announced seven weeks earlier, swung the balance with an appeal to unity and the need to uphold announced policy. He was supported by Cairns, Hayden, Crean and Cameron. The revolt was put down by 45 votes to

42. The members who had warned of dire consequences lost their seats at the next election.³⁷

Over the next several weeks the Caucus economic committee become involved in the 1974–75 Budget strategy. This flowed from two factors—the defeat of the ‘Treasury line’ within Cabinet, which weakened Crean, and the rising influence of Deputy Prime Minister Cairns in economic policy. Cairns used the Caucus economic committee to articulate and mobilise support for a new economic direction. The key meeting was on 12 August 1974 when Cairns won support for a more expansionary policy. This prevailed into the Budget document and was instrumental in Whitlam’s subsequent decision to replace Crean with Cairns.³⁸

A series of important Caucus debates followed the 1974–75 Budget as the FPLP asserted its claim to alter Budget and tax decisions. Its criticism centred on two main issues—the reduction in the tax deduction for education expenses from \$400 to \$150 a year, and a new surcharge on property income. The Caucus economic and education committees voted a fortnight after the Budget for the interim restoration of the \$400 concession, pending the replacement of the concessional deduction system with a fairer rebate system. The motion was proposed by Joe Berinson. Whitlam tried to kill off the revolt with a public statement that elevated the issue into a test of leadership. He prevailed against the Berinson amendment 53 votes to 26. But there was wide agreement with Berinson and the Caucus committee on the need to reform the tax deduction system. And it was replaced in the 1975–76 Hayden Budget.

The Caucus succeeded in modifying the property tax, originally opposed by the Treasury and then under attack for electoral and equity reasons. A joint meeting of the Caucus economic and welfare committees recommended a reduction in the tax from \$1.3 million to \$500 000. This was moved in Caucus by Senator Gietzelt and carried. Another motion by Paul Keating to abolish the tax completely was defeated 49 votes to 28. The next year, when Hayden was Treasurer, the tax was scrapped altogether.

The significance of the Caucus was demonstrated by a bitter dispute over beach-sand mining on Fraser Island. In November 1974 Whitlam gave Minerals and Energy Minister Rex Connor authority to issue export permits and Connor approved them in December 1974, just four days before Labor’s environment impact legislation came into effect. Environment Minister Moss Cass tried belatedly in both Cabinet and Caucus to reverse the export approval, having declined to act in late 1974. In April 1975 the relevant Caucus committee called for the Fraser Island export permits to be suspended, pending a full inquiry. The committee chairman, Senator Gietzelt, had that resolution passed in Caucus on the voices.³⁹ Whitlam supported Connor and the conflict went to Cabinet on 19 May with opposing submissions from Connor and Cass. Connor prevailed with Whitlam’s support, but many ministers felt there was a Cabinet majority for Cass. This was an important meeting which marked a watershed in Connor’s standing. For the first time his authority was checked, the prelude to his fall over the \$2 billion ‘Khemlani’ loan.⁴⁰

The battle now returned to the Caucus where a motion from Gietzelt, seconded by Mick Young (Port Adelaide, SA), sought to overturn the Cabinet

PAUL KEATING'S FUTILE VICTORY

BALLOT MINISTER OF STATE										DATE 21.10.75									
	1																		
JOHNSON	8	8	8	8	eliminated (4)														
INHES	4	eliminated (1)																	
HURFORD	13	13	3	16	1	17	17	3	20	7	27	eliminated (2)							
CROSS	6	6	eliminated (3)																
COHEN	7	7	1	8	eliminated (3)														
JENKINS	10	1	11	11	1	12	5	17	3	20	eliminated (6)								
KEATING	16	2	18	2	20	5	25	1	26	2	28	4	32	15	47	elected			
KERIN	11	11	11	1	12	12	eliminated (5)												
YOUNG	14	1	15	15	15	2	17	4	21	9	30	12	42	eliminated (8)					
INFORMAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
TOTAL	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89	89				
										Ray Thorburn 21.10.75 K. Keating Officer									

Tally sheet for Paul Keating's Caucus election to the Ministry. His hard-fought victory brought only a three-week term as Minister for Northern Australia in late 1975. (Private collection, Alan Ramsey)

Thirty-one ministers served in the Labor governments formed by Gough Whitlam after the 1972 and 1974 elections. Western Australia's Senator John Wheeldon filled the vacancy created by the defeat of Immigration Minister Al Grassby at the May 1974 double dissolution election, while another four new ministers joined the 26-member government between Lionel Murphy's appointment to the High Court in February 1975 and Rex Connor's resignation as Minister for Minerals and Energy on 14 October 1975. The last of these new ministers was Paul John Keating, the aggressively ambitious member for Blaxland in New South Wales and, at the time, Labor's youngest minister (at 31 years and 9 months) since Federation.

Despite the high political drama of the

time, with the government under siege in both Houses of the Parliament and its electoral standing disintegrating in the opinion polls, Keating's election by Caucus to the ministerial vacancy created by Connor's dramatic resignation was a fiercely contested affair. Nine candidates nominated, with Keating and Mick Young, the ex-shearer and high profile former ALP National Secretary, the clear favourites. The perception was not misplaced.

The tally sheet for the Caucus election, signed by returning officer Ray Thorburn, shows the intricacies of the exhaustive preferential ballot system. In a ballot of 89 votes, Keating topped the first count with 16 primaries ahead of Young, with 14, and South Australia's Chris Hurford with 13. Yet so close was the voting between Keating

and Young that not until the preferences of all seven rivals were distributed did Keating gain an absolute majority—47 votes to Young's 42. Keating was never headed at any stage of the count. He won it with preferences from all candidates, while Young's chances were crippled by gaining no preferences from two of them—Keating's New South Wales colleague Barry Cohen and Manfred Cross. Cohen and Cross between them delivered Keating

seven preference votes, two more than his eventual winning margin.

It was a futile victory. Keating was sworn in as Minister for Northern Australia the same day—21 October 1975. Three weeks later Sir John Kerr sacked the entire government. It would be another seven years and four months before Keating returned to the Treasury benches.

Alan Ramsey

decision. Cass and Connor argued forcefully, and Connor eventually prevailed by 42 votes to 41. But he was diminished. The Fraser Island dispute showed how a junior minister could reopen a closed issue via Caucus, despite the opposition of the Prime Minister.

Within a week of the Fraser Island battle, the Caucus inflicted its most decisive rebuff to the Cabinet.⁴¹ On 27 May 1975 it overturned Cabinet's decision to lower the reserve price for wool during the new selling season. The Cabinet decision was opposed by Agriculture Minister, Senator Ken Wriedt (Tas.), but carried by Acting Treasurer Hayden, in the cause of fiscal restraint. Hayden spent a dramatic day defending the Cabinet decision on the floor of Parliament against the Country Party and the wool industry lobby. But within the Caucus two young New South Wales backbenchers who had previously worked for the Bureau of Agricultural Economics—Bob Whan (Eden-Monaro, NSW) and John Kerin (Macarthur, NSW)—raised the Caucus numbers against him. They argued the Cabinet decision would undermine Labor in rural seats and that it was flawed on economic grounds. This decision—52 votes to 29 against the Cabinet—was a high tide of Caucus judgement.⁴²

Relations between Caucus and Cabinet had entered a more effective phase in 1975 after the turmoil of the previous year. This was assisted by an improvement in Cabinet procedures and the quality of the Cabinet. A new Cabinet committee, the Expenditure Review Committee, was created in January 1975. Consisting of six ministers, it established a clearer direction for economic policy and became a *de facto* inner Cabinet.⁴³

However, the transition to a better Cabinet was traumatic. On 2 July 1975 Whitlam advised the Governor-General to withdraw the ministerial commission of Cairns. This followed the revelation that the Deputy Leader had authorised an overseas loan-raising, despite a denial in Parliament that he had done so. Cairns' explanation was that he could not remember signing the letter. Having sacked Cairns, Whitlam had to secure Party backing for his action. When Caucus met on 14 July, the Chairman, Senator Brown, ruled that it was only the Caucus, not the Governor-General, who could remove Cairns as Deputy Leader and, accordingly, Cairns was still a member of the frontbench.

REMEMBRANCE DAY, 1975

My instinctive reaction, vividly remembered, was to say, 'That bastard Kerr! I knew Gough was crazy to trust such a pompous old clown.' Few events cause us to recall precisely where we were and what we were doing at the time they occurred. Generations of Labor activists and supporters remember the sacking of the Whitlam Government on Remembrance Day 1975 as one such event.

Caucus met at 9.30 am that day, Tuesday, 11 November 1975, with the Federal Parliament consumed by the Supply crisis. Confidence was growing in Labor ranks, encouraged by the latest opinion polls. Gough Whitlam, Frank Crean and Fred Daly were meeting in Whitlam's office with the Coalition leadership of Malcolm Fraser, Doug Anthony and Phillip Lynch. Whitlam proposed a half-Senate election to break the deadlock caused by the Coalition's refusal to pass the Budget in the Senate.

Meanwhile, in Caucus, it was business as usual. Caucus debated a motion to establish a committee to investigate funding options for Old Sydney Town and dealt with the issue of long-service leave in the Australian Capital Territory. Kim Beazley Snr recalled the unreality of the Caucus deliberations 25 years later. They reminded him 'of the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church discussing the colour of their vestments when the Russian Revolution was in full swing'.

After phoning the Governor-General to finalise an appointment for 1 pm to seek a half-Senate election, Whitlam arrived in Caucus to report on his meeting with the Coalition leadership. Crean and Daly had been disconcerted by Fraser's smug attitude. Crean sat next to Doug McClelland, who asked 'How did it go?' Crean, taciturn, responded, 'No bally good.' Fraser had not budged from his demand that an election be held for the House of Representatives as well as the Senate. To the

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One of the lasting memories of the Whitlam government's dismissal in November 1975 was the leader's extemporaneous speech to the Labor faithful from the steps of Parliament House. (National Library of Australia)

applause of Caucus, Whitlam announced he would be advising the Governor-General to grant a half-Senate election only.

Kerr had told Whitlam he could not see him until early afternoon, because of the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. The Attorney-General, Kep Enderby, who sat next to Kerr at the ceremony, was nonplussed by Kerr's 'remote and odd' behaviour. More telling were the chilling words of Kerr's new wife, who until April 1975 had been Nancy Robson. She was now known as Anne because, in the withering words of Whitlam, 'she had ceased to fancy Nancy'. Enderby still shudders as he recalls her clinical and deliberate 'Goodbye, Mr Attorney', uttered as the ceremony finished.

At 1 pm at Yarralumla, Kerr ambushed Whitlam with a letter dismissing his government. Unbeknown to Whitlam, Kerr had been in collusion with Chief Justice Sir Garfield Barwick and Opposition Leader Malcolm Fraser to bring Labor down. Kerr had betrayed the elected Prime Minister and debauched the office of Governor-General. The Labor Party would never forgive his

treachery. Whitlam returned to The Lodge, where he planned tactics with senior staff and three of his senior colleagues—Frank Crean, Fred Daly and Kep Enderby. He still had time to eat the lunch he had ordered on his way to Yarralumla—medium steak with German mustard and horiatiki side salad.

Whitlam's inner circle focused exclusively on how events would unfold that afternoon in the House of Representatives. Incredibly, with the Senate due to consider the Appropriations Bills shortly after resuming at 2 pm, no one thought to tell any of the Labor senators, let alone Labor's Senate leadership. Senate Leader Ken Wriedt acknowledges, 'The fact is, I didn't know what had happened. Gough didn't tell me.'

Wriedt still didn't know when, after lunch, he called on the Appropriations Bills at 2.20 pm for yet another vote. Labor had urged continuously for a vote on the bills since they were introduced into the Senate on 14 October. This time, to Wriedt's surprise, the Coalition instantly acceded. The last, vital stage of the coup was completed in just four minutes. The bills were passed unanimously on the voices, and the Senate adjourned at 2.24 pm. Labor had forfeited its only chance to frustrate Kerr's decision.

Moving swiftly, and ignoring Labor's majority in the House, the Coalition took control of events. By late that afternoon, Kerr had assented to the Appropriations

Bills despite a Labor motion of no confidence in Fraser as the appointed Prime Minister, and the dissolution of both Houses had been proclaimed on the steps of Parliament. Thousands of Canberrans converged on Parliament House where Whitlam, to chants of 'We want Gough! We want Gough!', delivered one of the most memorable speeches in Australian political history.

Ladies and Gentlemen, well may we say God Save the Queen, because nothing will save the Governor-General. The proclamation which you have just heard read by the Governor-General's secretary was countersigned Malcolm Fraser, who will undoubtedly go down in history from Remembrance Day 1975 as Kerr's cur.

Whitlam exhorted supporters, staffers, and Caucus members, crowded around the steps of Parliament House, to maintain their 'rage and enthusiasm'. His passionate appeal became the rallying cry of Labor's subsequent election campaign.

Whitlam's words were taken to heart. Australian politics—and Canberra restaurants—have never known a night like it.

(The Caucus minutes for 11 November 1975 are missing. A number of Caucus members assisted in providing their recollections of the Caucus meeting that morning and the events that followed.)

John Faulkner

Whitlam accepted Brown's ruling. He then moved that the office of Deputy Leader be declared vacant. An emotional debate ensued. In his defence Cairns said Whitlam should have gone to the Caucus before sacking him:

Caucus has been put in the position of rejecting or accepting Whitlam's decision, of supporting or rejecting the government. Under this situation, can I be judged fairly? The Prime Minister has used brinkmanship in this matter to force your hands. It is now to be 'Cairns or me'.

Cairns had identified the reality in Whitlam's use of power. By presenting Caucus with a *fait accompli*, Whitlam made support for Cairns too high a political price. Before the meeting the Prime Minister had said that even if Caucus confirmed Cairns, he would not commission him as a minister. In the Party room Doug Everingham appealed to Whitlam to withdraw his ultimatum:

'I believe Whitlam is our best leader but if he is given this right, then no minister is safe.' Bob Whan backed Whitlam: 'We cannot have a minister who does not know whether or not he signed a letter.' Tom Uren said that 'Gough has lost his balance'. Kep Enderby (Canberra, ACT) spoke against Cairns and said what many believed—that Junie Morosi was the real problem. Whitlam replied at the end of a long debate and won by 55 votes to 33. Frank Crean defeated Kim Beazley Snr in the contest for deputy. Cairns contested the ministerial vacancy but lost this too.⁴⁴

The issue of a parliamentary salary increase returned in September 1975 and this time the Caucus showed greater maturity. In March the \$5500 rise, disallowed the previous July, had been accepted. A September 1975 report from the Remuneration Tribunal recommended that parliamentarians' pay be indexed and backdated to May. Caucus felt this was excessive, given the demands for community restraint. The Party room accepted by 46 votes to 28 an amendment moved by Joe Berinson to reject the rise; Jim McClland, now the Labour Minister, pushed strongly for rejection.⁴⁵

In summary, in the three years of the Whitlam government the Caucus reversed only a handful of the thousands of Cabinet decisions. This list was distinctly modest. A Caucus that met just once a week had limited capacity to marshal the policy material necessary to assert itself against Cabinet. The Caucus was usually moderate and responsible. It came close to a damaging humiliation of the Cabinet on some occasions, notably over the July 1974 mini-budget, but the revolt was narrowly averted. The argument Whitlam typically used in the Party room was the need to uphold the government's authority, and Caucus was mindful of this factor. Whitlam saw monetary, tariff and budgetary decisions as belonging to a more sensitive category, and he managed to quarantine most but not all of them from Caucus challenge. However, the Party room refused to concede any loss of sovereignty, and this conflict was never resolved.

When Caucus did challenge the Cabinet it was usually motivated more by electoral fears than ideology. The Party room was usually diligent in its consideration of policy issues. As the government's standing declined, the backbench became preoccupied by the survival instinct. The Whitlam period revealed the nexus between Cabinet competence and an effective Caucus. When the Cabinet was in turmoil, then relations with the Caucus deteriorated: in any assessment of the defects of the Whitlam Government, difficulties within Cabinet far outweigh anything done by Caucus. The Caucus committee system, although it operated unevenly, was essential in giving Caucus members a sense of ownership of government decisions. It proved to be a critical innovation for Labor in power. The pressure on Caucus members was intense in the final two years of the Whitlam Government, given an inflamed political situation and a deteriorating economy. Yet the FPLP's procedures evolved and the Caucus matured, a process notable as 1975 advanced. Factionalism became less important and issues were assessed more on political merit. The Caucus had a fine record in its elections to the ministry to fill casual vacancies—John Wheeldon (Senator,

WA), Jim McClelland, Joe Riordan (Phillip, NSW), Joe Berinson and Paul Keating.

Despite the occasional scare, there was no prospect that the Whitlam Caucus would degenerate into the self-destructive exchanges that prevailed at earlier times in Labor history. There was frequent criticism of Whitlam's elitist style but a recognition that it was the companion to his strengths. Most Caucus members knew there would have been no government without Whitlam. A final retrospective judgement is that Caucus drew the right lessons from the searing 1972–75 political experience. Unlike other periods of Labor history, the Caucus used the Whitlam years to deepen its policy grip, penetrate the Party's defects and fashion a more formidable Labor Party over the next 20 years.

THE HAYDEN YEARS: 1976–82

Alan Ramsey

Bill Hayden woke on the morning of Sunday, 14 December 1975, chilled by the reality he was the only surviving Queensland ALP member of the House of Representatives after Labor's brutal defeat the previous day. On the other side of the continent, Kim Beazley Snr, 30 years the Member for Fremantle, similarly found himself the only Labor MHR left in Western Australia. Yet Hayden and Beazley, both ministers in the outgoing Whitlam Government, were among the fortunate few. The new Fraser Coalition's majority was a massive 55. Labor had lost 29 seats, almost one in every two. In Tasmania, Labor had won all five seats only eighteen months earlier; now it had none. Reduced to little more than a rump, Labor's numbers overall in a House of 127 had crashed from 65 to 36. It was the Party's worst humiliation since the defeat of the Scullin Government 44 years earlier.

Almost as destructive of Labor was how many of its defeated MPs had been the new blood of Caucus. A full 21 of the 26 casualties were Whitlamites, part of the great regeneration of Caucus under Gough Whitlam's leadership.¹ Six of these had come into Parliament in the 1969 general election.² Another ten had arrived in the December 1972 election that finally took Labor into office for the first time since Chifley's defeat in 1949.³ Three more, including John Dawkins (Tangney, WA), a future Labor Treasurer, had been elected in the 1974 double dissolution.⁴ Queensland's Doug Everingham and the ACT's Kep Enderby, both ministers in the Whitlam Government, had been elected in by-elections in 1967 and 1970, respectively. All six Labor casualties in Victoria, including Labor's only woman MHR, Joan Child (Henty, Vic.), had come into Parliament in either 1972 or 1974. Seven of the eight Labor seats lost in New

South Wales had been won since 1969. The carnage was as unsparing of newer MPs as it had been of geography.⁵

Yet another casualty was of symbolic significance for Whitlam. In February 1966, with Whitlam, as Deputy Leader, facing expulsion by a hostile Federal Executive he had publicly derided as the ‘twelve witless men’, Queensland’s Dr Rex Patterson, a Fulbright scholar and agricultural economist, won a famous by-election as Labor’s candidate in the seat of Dawson. Whitlam campaigned relentlessly for Patterson, even though Labor had not held Dawson since its creation in 1949. Labor’s prospects, even with such a quality candidate, were thought remote. Yet Patterson won with a stunning swing of almost 14 per cent. The personal political return for Whitlam was instant. When Labor’s Federal Executive met in Canberra five days later it was Queensland’s two votes, under direction from Brisbane ALP head office and motivated by strong rank-and-file reaction to Whitlam’s role in the Dawson victory, that ensured he survived expulsion by a vote of 7 to 5.⁶ Nine years later, even Rex Patterson could not survive the voter upheaval. He was one of six ministers defeated in 1975.

The extent of Labor’s 1975 defeat had profound repercussions for Caucus. Heartsick at the treachery of his government’s opponents and at Labor’s sweeping rejection after three general elections in three years, Whitlam immediately sought to engineer his own succession as Leader. Hayden, his first choice, rejected the overtures out of hand when Whitlam phoned him at his Ipswich home on that Sunday morning after polling day. Bob Hawke, ACTU President and Whitlam’s next choice, found the suggestion seductive if absurdly impractical. Even if the transition could have been possible, Hawke had no stomach for spending years rebuilding the Party in Opposition. Nor did Caucus, by and large, have much stomach for Hawke at the time. Over the previous three years, hard enough in themselves, Hawke, from the safety of the ACTU, had lectured Whitlam Government ministers constantly. Caucus members were fed up with his gratuitous sniping. Hayden, in his autobiography twenty years later, would write of Whitlam’s leadership approach on that bleak Sunday morning:

The telephone rang for the umpteenth time, disturbing my dark meditations. It was Gough Whitlam. ‘Comrade, how’s it going in Oxley?’ I was not in the happiest of moods nor ready to be on my best behaviour, ‘F . . . ing awful like everywhere else.’ The only news Whitlam had was like a roll call of the brave and the bold, bodies fallen all over the country. ‘Comrade; you’re still certain you don’t want to have the leadership of the party?’ I was livid. ‘J . . . f . . . ing C . . . Gough, I don’t even know if I’m going to be in the bloody Parliament. We look like going to preferences. Leadership is the last f . . . ing thing I’m interested in.’ The expletives were triggered in part by my general agitation; I was after all a trifle edgy. In response, Whitlam sounded wounded. ‘Oh, very well, if that’s the way you feel. I’ll talk to Hawke. He’s the only other prospect. After this setback I’m prepared to hand over the leadership.’⁷

When the Caucus learnt what was going on behind its back, the hostility was immense. Whitlam’s manoeuvring, however doomed to failure, only further undermined his diminished standing with his colleagues. Caucus was no more in the mood to indulge his infuriating elitism after such an electoral thrashing than it was to re-endorse his leadership for another full three years. When the

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Gough Whitlam was re-elected leader following the 1975 election rout. The ballot for Deputy saw Tom Uren narrowly defeat Paul Keating (right) and Mick Young. (Australian Information Service, private collection, Bob Hawke)

remnants of Caucus met in Canberra seven weeks after the election, Whitlam was re-elected Leader with an absolute majority over Lionel Bowen and Frank Crean (36 votes to a combined 27); but Caucus set about circumscribing his authority by electing three Whitlam critics to the other leadership positions of the FLP and by insisting on a mid-term Caucus review of the entire frontbench.⁸

The Left's Tom Uren outlasted seven rivals to become Whitlam's Deputy. The exhaustive preferential ballot saw Uren defeat his ambitious young New South Wales colleague, Paul Keating, 33 votes to 30, with South Australia's Mick Young a clear third. Tasmania's Ken Wriedt, whose previous good relationship with Whitlam had soured in government, remained Senate Leader by easily defeating New South Wales' Jim McClelland, a strong pro-Whitlam candidate, 38 votes to 25. Queensland's Jim Keeffe, a former ALP Federal President, albeit one sustained solely by the anti-Whitlam forces on the Federal Executive, completed a surprising Left double by winning the Senate deputy leadership by the same 38 to 25 margin, again over Jim McClelland, in a field of four.

Caucus completed the reorganisation of its frontbench by restricting its numbers to twenty. It re-elected ten of the former Whitlam Cabinet, including Kim Beazley Snr and R. F. X. 'The Strangler' Connor, both vehemently opposed to Whitlam's autocratic leadership.⁹ The circumstances of Connor's ministerial resignation in the Whitlam government's terminal months had left him as embittered towards Whitlam as was South Australia's Clyde Cameron, now a malevolent presence on Labor's backbench. Significantly, Caucus elected ten shadow ministers, three of them from the Whitlam Government (Uren, Bowen and Keating), who would survive as a nucleus of the first Hawke Ministry in 1983. The seven others were Ralph Willis (Gellibrand, Vic.), Gordon Scholes (Corio, Vic.), Chris Hurford, Mick Young, Peter Morris (Shortland, NSW) and Senators John Button (Vic.) and Don Grimes (Tas.).

The outcome of the Caucus ballots did much more than determine the frontbench. It signalled to Whitlam a clear majority of his colleagues would not tolerate his leadership beyond the emergence of an unambiguous alternative. It acknowledged publicly that, like the electorate, his own parliamentary Party had lost confidence in him. It made clear the next leadership generational change would likely be a contest between Keating and Young. It ended the leadership aspirations of 'Diamond Jim' McClelland, so shaken by his failure to win either Senate post that he declined to nominate for the frontbench, sank into increasing pique and retired from Parliament at the subsequent general election in 1977. It left unresolved the immediate political future of Bill Hayden, almost reclusive since Labor's election defeat and a non-starter in the frontbench ballots. Perhaps most significantly, the strong anti-Whitlam tenor of its decisions suggested that, until his successor emerged, Caucus would remain destabilised and dysfunctional under his leadership.

This was the sombre mood of Caucus on 27 January 1976. The Whitlam era was nearing its end. It would, in its political infirmity, limp through the better part of another two years. Then, after a second devastating election defeat, almost eleven years of some of Labor's more glorious moments would be gone, as well as some of its most turbulent. Whitlam was a genuine leadership giant, a man of ideas, energy and courage, however reckless at times. He reshaped the feudal power structure of the Labor Party every bit as much as he reshaped its electoral appeal. Fundamental to his reformism was the enhanced authority of the FPLP that ended forever total subservience to the narrow collective of the six ALP state branches.

The story of the next seven years would be, for Caucus, the transition from Whitlam through Hayden to Hawke. Hayden's leadership was the bridging five years. These would be as difficult for him as they often would be traumatic for Caucus. In the end the effort would prove beyond him. Hayden was no supremely confident unilateralist like Whitlam and no supremely engaging populist like Hawke. He was a plain man of old Labor values subject to new Labor pressures. Whitlam had given the ALP and its constituency the brief glory of government after 23 lost years. Labor wanted restored what it felt had been allowed to fritter away, if not stolen, and it wanted it sooner rather than later. Hayden was anything but a Messiah and never saw himself as such. Seeking to satisfy the internal pressures he always felt such a burden overwhelmed him. The wonder is his leadership survived five years. That it did so was tribute to his tenacity and energy far more than to the patience of his Caucus colleagues. For despite everything, not least the destabilising campaign by Hawke and his allies throughout 1982, Hayden and his frontbench rebuilt Labor's electoral credibility and took Caucus to the very brink of government.

Two incidents in those early months after the 1975 disaster only sharpened the political divisiveness of the time. One concerned the man most responsible for the upheaval in national life caused by the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. At its 27 January meeting Caucus served notice it would pursue Sir John Kerr for as long as he remained Governor-General. It adopted unanimously a

motion proposed by Kim Beazley Snr and seconded by Senator Doug McClelland (NSW)—no relation to Senator Jim McClelland—which condemned Kerr as ‘a man who has grossly abused the Crown prerogative’. It went on to ‘deplore’ his Australia Day speech two days earlier ‘as an apologia for his squalid establishment intrigue and his contemptible and deliberate deceit of his former ministers. He has placed the prestige of his office in jeopardy, and resignation is the only service he can now render the Crown’.¹⁰

Three weeks later, when the new Parliament met for the first time on 16 February, Caucus voted to boycott Kerr’s official opening.¹¹ All 63 Labor MPs observed the boycott. Foolishly, Bob Hawke, still vocal on the sidelines, publicly criticised the decision. For his pains Bill Hayden publicly slapped down the ACTU and Federal ALP President. He told his home state’s major newspaper, Brisbane’s *Courier-Mail*:

Mr Hawke was not always terribly helpful to the Labor Government with some of his impulsive, intemperate comments and his occasional emotional outbursts. The fact that many of these comments were made in distant parts of the world, like London or Delphi, didn’t diminish the blow . . . Given the present industrial situation, Mr Hawke might find it best to give an undivided commitment to the aspirations of the workers of Australia and to save politics for when he becomes a politician.

What nobody could know was that this would be just the first exchange in the guerrilla warfare between them over the next seven years. At the time Caucus was unmoved by Hawke’s gratuitous rebuke. It remained unrelenting in its uncompromising attitude to Kerr right up until he resigned his 1978 appointment to Paris with UNESCO, without ever taking up the job, and withdrew from public life.

Nine days after the new Parliament began sitting, Caucus was gob-smacked yet again by the capricious behaviour of its leader. Rupert Murdoch’s national daily, the *Australian*, and his Sydney tabloid, the *Daily Telegraph*, had turned savagely against the Whitlam government throughout 1975. Now, on the morning of 25 February 1976, the two newspapers carried lurid stories of an extraordinary breakfast meeting in Sydney the previous December, just a few days before polling day. At this meeting were Gough Whitlam, Labor’s Federal Secretary, David Combe, and two visiting Iraqi officials. The purpose: supposedly to discuss a \$US500 000 payment to a Federal ALP then \$400 000 in debt. Both stories, under a London dateline, were written by an unidentified ‘special’ writer.

The news infuriated Caucus. Its temper was not improved by learning that Hawke, as the Party’s Federal President, Queensland’s Jack Egerton, its Senior Vice-President soon to be stripped of Party office and expelled for accepting a knighthood from Queensland’s Bjelke-Petersen Government, and New South Wales’ John Ducker, the Junior Vice-President, had known of the meeting for almost a fortnight.¹²

At a volatile Caucus meeting the same day, an angry Kim Beazley Snr called on Whitlam to resign if he could not clear up the ‘untidy and unsatisfactory’ affair.¹³ While Beazley would quit Labor’s frontbench a week later rather than serve under Whitlam’s leadership, Whitlam at the time obfuscated, only admit-

BILL HAYDEN'S CAUCUS

When I arrived in Caucus after the 1961 election it was unrepresentative of the society it sought to govern. Its average age was higher than the community's; there was a dearth of tertiary-educated members; it was top-heavy with blue-collar representation; there was only one woman; there were no Aboriginal members.

The Caucus was also riven—by sectarianism, personal animosity and hostility to anyone notably different. In this environment furious battles were fought over big issues—Vietnam, State Aid, the relationship between Caucus and the Federal Executive and the Federal Conference. The first two issues, in particular, engaged the bitter passions behind the splits of the 1950s, still an aching wound in the collective psyche. And Caucus had to contend with a Federal Executive and Federal Conference that could meet in closed session and pass decrees binding on Caucus, which was not represented on either body.

When I left Caucus 27 years later in 1988, so much had changed. It was a much younger Caucus; there was an abundance of tertiary-educated members; there were women in increasingly important roles. (But there was still no Aboriginal member.) The things that divided the Caucus at the beginning of the 1960s no longer divided it at the end of the 1980s. The big issues were debated, and policy created, very differently. Sectarianism and hostility to change were gone; so were the paralysing conflicts with Federal Executive and Federal Conference. It was Gough Whitlam and the supporters he gathered around him in Caucus who provided the impetus for change. He propelled Labor into office by overcoming those, including Caucus members, who preferred defeat and the perquisites of minor power to victory and the responsibilities of government. Whitlam's drive for modernisation of the Party attracted new members who ensured



Bill Hayden spent almost 27 years in Caucus, including 5 years as Leader. (New South Wales Branch, Australian Labor Party)

that Caucus became more representative and thereby more acceptable in composition and style to the middle-class voter.

After thirteen years in office, unequalled in Labor history, does Caucus represent the community? After all, at the 1996 election the Coalition gained more blue-collar votes than Labor; hard-core Labor seats were lost. Had Caucus become 'top-heavy'? While I still fret about this prospect, I now acknowledge that Caucus has a great asset with this plethora of intellectual talent necessary for managing change, managing policy, managing large departments staffed by highly skilled people to obtain outcomes which best meet Labor's objectives. But Caucus needs to be more than competent technocratic managers. If democratic socialism, as we understood it, is stone dead, we need a redefinition of Labor's purpose, a reinvocation of Ben Chifley's 'light on the hill'. That is the task of Caucus during federal Labor's second century.

Bill Hayden

ting to having met the two officials 'socially' with Combe. No money had been discussed, he insisted, although he would later concede to Labor's Federal Executive he had 'authorised' Combe to explore the Iraqi funds option. Mick Young temporarily rescued Whitlam by successfully moving, in a 33 to 22 vote, that Caucus defer the matter to an urgent inquiry by the Federal Executive.¹⁴ Whitlam later repeated his denials at a Caucus briefing. 'There were no discussions [with the two officials] about election funds,' he told reporters. 'There were no undertakings given about foreign policy.'¹⁵

Hayden meanwhile was being pressured by Young, John Button and Jim McClelland, among others, to challenge for the leadership, he would confirm many years later. An hysterical Murdoch press was insisting Whitlam's political career was 'finished'. Instead, the hostile newspaper campaign probably saved Whitlam. Caucus refused to be coerced, even though the Federal Executive subsequently 'condemned' Whitlam, Combe and a former Victorian State ALP Secretary, Bill Hartley, for a 'grave error of judgement' in canvassing a 'proposed gift of funds from Arab sources for the 1975 election campaign'.¹⁶ No money ever arrived. 'There were Caucus members, I was one of them, who did not approve of what Whitlam had done,' Hayden would later understate the Party reaction. 'On the other hand, we cared even less for the notion that Murdoch's newspapers could depose and choose our leaders for us.'¹⁷

The further toll on Whitlam's leadership credibility was heavy, however. At the 17 March Caucus meeting that simply 'noted', on the voices, the Federal Executive's findings, Queensland Senator George Georges wanted Caucus to insist Whitlam resign as leader 'at a time convenient to the party'.¹⁸ He was ruled out of order. Senate Leader Ken Wriedt sought an 'unqualified assurance' that Whitlam would 'consult with the parliamentary executive and/or the parliamentary leaders on any matter of substance which concerns the welfare of the party, and unless such an assurance be given, he be asked to resign'.¹⁹ This, too, was ruled out of order. Caucus had closed ranks, despite deep misgivings. Wriedt later told ABC radio, somewhat mischievously: 'I have no doubt the overwhelming majority of Caucus is just as solidly behind Mr Whitlam as they were before.' It was a remark that needed no elaboration. Nor did Beazley's when he told Caucus: 'E. G. W. simply stands for Edward Gough Whitlam. It does not stand for eminently greater wisdom.'²⁰

There was one positive from the affair. It ended Hayden's indulgent self-exile. The day after the 1975 election defeat he had woken in a funk at how close he'd come to losing his seat and, with it, for an ex-copper with three young children, his livelihood. This explained his colourful language to Whitlam. Hayden panicked at the thought of how he would have earned a living had he lost. He had no idea, even though his fourteen years in Parliament qualified him for a more than reasonable pension for life. Then and there he decided to get himself a law degree—at voters' expense. He would enrol part-time at Queensland University. Hence his total lack of interest in the leadership and his refusal, despite his seniority, to serve on the Caucus frontbench. Hayden had felt the icy wind of unemployment and it terrified him.²¹

The self-exile lasted just seven weeks. Hayden, under pressure, realised his mistake and, with Beazley's resignation, his colleagues elected him to the

Shadow Ministry. Four days later a second Western Australian, Senator John Wheeldon, followed Beazley in disgust to the backbench. In his stead, Caucus elected the Left's Senator Arthur Gietzelt after a tied 30 to 30 vote with Senator Peter Walsh (WA) was decided on a count-back.²² Seven years later both would become Hawke Government ministers.

Like Beazley Snr, at the time the Parliament's longest-serving MP, Wheeldon would leave politics at the 1977 election. So too the sulking Jim McClelland from New South Wales and two Victorians, the terminally diminished Dr J. F. Cairns, and Frank Crean, former Treasurer and briefly Deputy Prime Minister. Rex Connor did not live long enough to enjoy the personal satisfaction of seeing Whitlam lose again. He died in August 1977, less than three months before the election that finally killed Whitlam's leadership. Strike down six more from the vanishing ranks of the Whitlam years.

There was a nice footnote to the new parliamentary Executive. With Hayden, a former Treasurer, taking on Defence, one other significant change saw the youngest member, at 32, of Whitlam's frontbench—and the last minister to join the Whitlam government before its dismissal—move from Agriculture to Minerals and Energy. It could only have been Whitlam's sense of humour that prompted him to give Paul Keating, the boy from Bankstown in inner western Sydney, the shadow portfolio of Agriculture in the first place, even if he did hold it a mere seven weeks. Now, in the changes following the Beazley and Wheeldon resignations, Keating was given the significant responsibility of Minerals and Energy, a portfolio he would shadow for all of seven years in Opposition before Hayden, in the last desperate fortnight of his leadership, would terrify Hawke ('He's fucked us all!')²³ and crush Ralph Willis by making Keating shadow Treasurer six weeks before the general election that made him the real thing. Yet it was Minerals and Energy that made Keating a figure of national standing in Opposition, just as the Treasury made him the dominant minister in the Hawke Government. And it was Whitlam and Hayden, respectively, who anointed him to achieve both.

Caucus would continue to curb Whitlam's authority right up until he resigned after the 1977 election loss. In an overhaul of its rules, Caucus rejected his proposal for an inner Cabinet and outer Ministry in government, even though Hawke's influence after Labor's 1983 victory would see a grateful Caucus concede to Hawke what it had refused Whitlam six years earlier.²⁴ Caucus also approved a new rule insisting the parliamentary leader could not do what Whitlam had done in 1975: sack a minister (Cairns) on his own authority. In future, Caucus decided, the leader could dismiss a minister or shadow minister only with the support of at least two of the three parliamentary co-leaders and after confirmation by the full Caucus.²⁵ Caucus even overruled its own parliamentary Executive's recommendation supporting a restricted Senate inquiry into Indonesia's invasion of East Timor during those last dramatic weeks of the 1975 election campaign. Over Whitlam's objections, Caucus added an additional term of reference which widened the proposed inquiry to embrace the behaviour of the Whitlam Government.²⁶ The inquiry remained stillborn only when the Fraser Government refused to support it.

Whitlam remained unchastened to the end. In an interview on *A Current*

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The FPLP leadership team under Bill Hayden. Left to right: Lionel Bowen (Deputy Leader), Bill Hayden, Ken Wriedt (Senate Leader) and John Button (Deputy Senate Leader). (Canberra Times)

Affair in late 1976 he was asked did he think he was a handicap to Labor? ‘Oh, I could be, I suppose,’ he replied with characteristic offhandedness. ‘I don’t think so.’ Would some of his Caucus colleagues see him as a handicap? ‘Some would, but not the coming ones. The has-beens say that. They like to blame me for their own failures as well as, I suppose, my own.’²⁷ And when he confronted a reluctant challenge by Hayden, encouraged by Keating, at the Caucus mid-term review on 31 May 1977, the Great Man demonstrated yet again his remarkable resilience.

Despite everything, Whitlam prevailed, barely, by 32 votes to 30. It was the fourth time in nine years Whitlam had won a leadership ballot, having failed once himself against Arthur Calwell in 1966. He had withstood the combined efforts of Cairns and Frank Crean after Calwell resigned in February 1967. Cairns had challenged a year later and now a new, younger contender had almost succeeded. Hayden would write nineteen years later: ‘I was glad I did so well yet did not win. A firm claim for the future had been lodged, while Gough had been spared a humiliating defeat. He certainly did not deserve that.’²⁸

Maybe. But Hayden remained convinced ever after that Paul Keating had doublecrossed him. Having persuaded him to challenge Whitlam rather than Uren for the deputy leadership, which is what Hayden had intended originally, Hayden believed Keating had then voted for Whitlam. Hayden felt Keating planned all along to run for the Deputy’s job himself, believing he could defeat Uren but not Hayden, and thus establish his own leadership legitimacy, if not ahead of Hayden then certainly against the predatory Hawke.²⁹ But Keating went backwards in the ballot for Deputy. He lost for the second time to Uren, this time by the slightly greater margin of 34 votes to 28. It would be another thirteen years before Keating would finally get the job Tom Uren twice denied him. But Whitlam’s New South Wales colleague, Senator Doug McClelland, ousted Jim Keefe from the Senate Deputy’s post 32 to 29, and the Left suffered

another loss when Uren's New South Wales soul mate, Senator Arthur Gietzelt, was dropped from the Shadow Ministry.³⁰

It all became academic six months later. In December 1977, Fraser sprang a snap poll a year early to ensure his opponent would be a debilitated Whitlam and not a resurgent Hayden. The resultant Labor shellacking convinced Whitlam it would never be time again, not for him. This was the election in which Don Chipp's Democrats made their debut, winning a remarkable 9.4 per cent of the House of Representatives vote but no seats. Labor's primary vote slipped even further to a miserable 39.6 per cent, although it gained two seats in Queensland on redrawn boundaries. Among the few bright spots for Labor was the re-election of John Dawkins in Kim Beazley Snr's seat of Fremantle. Six other new Labor MPs were all future ministers: Barry Jones (Lalor, Vic.), Brian Howe (Batman, Vic.), Clyde Holding (Melbourne Ports, Vic.), Neal Blewett (Bonython, SA), John Brown (Parramatta, NSW) and Ben Humphreys (Griffith, Qld).

Ten days after the election, Whitlam stepped down, Hayden became the new Leader (36 votes to 28 over Lionel Bowen), Bowen replaced Uren as Deputy Leader (33 votes to 29), and Victoria's John Button became Senate Deputy to Ken Wriedt. The uniform eastern states sweep of the leadership was complete. So was the make-over of the new frontbench, with six changes. Doug Everingham, who had regained his north Queensland seat in the general election, and Moss Cass, both former ministers from the Whitlam Government, returned to the frontbench, along with Arthur Gietzelt. The genuine newcomers were Barry Cohen (Robertson, NSW) and Senator Peter Walsh and Labor's first woman shadow minister, Senator Susan Ryan (ACT).³¹

The real surprise was how poorly Keating and Uren polled. Keating had stood aside from both leadership ballots. His showing in the general ballot for the other sixteen frontbench slots reflected his judgement. The ballot was topped by Mick Young with the votes of all 66 members of the new Caucus, followed by Ralph Willis (63) and Chris Hurford (60). Keating languished in ninth place, with 48 votes, behind Gordon Scholes (57), Everingham (56), Senator Don Grimes (55), Peter Morris (53) and Dick Klugman (49). Uren finished even further back, equal eleventh with Susan Ryan and U. E. (Ted) Innes on 45 votes.³²

The five years of Hayden's leadership were turbulent: three ALP National Conferences; eight by-elections; one general election; all five of John Howard's Budgets as Malcolm Fraser's Treasurer; a rewriting of Labor policy, notably the electoral imperative of economic policy and the internal minefield of uranium policy; Hayden's damaging falling out with two of his closest Caucus colleagues; a bitter public outburst from Bob Hawke after Hayden outmanoeuvred him on economic policy at the 1979 Federal Conference in Adelaide; the never-ending speculation of a move to Canberra by New South Wales Premier Neville Wran, the pre-eminent Labor politician of the period; a perpetual tug-of-war for two years with a minority of the Caucus and a majority of the union movement in defiance of Bob Hawke's political ambitions; an unsuccessful challenge to his leadership; a destructive by-election defeat; and, finally, his own leadership resignation.

There was also a remarkable incident which, had it become known at the

'SOME RESPECTFUL BUT BLUNT SUGGESTIONS . . .'

Rod Cameron and his Sydney-based RANOP polling organisation worked for the Labor Party across almost two decades, from a watching brief on Gough Whitlam's winning 'It's Time' campaign in 1972 to Labor's fourth consecutive election victory under Bob Hawke's leadership in 1990. For eighteen years ANOP's political research underpinned the election, or re-election, of twelve federal and state Labor governments in 24 winning general election campaigns. By 1979 Cameron's marginal seat research was being used to influence Caucus attitudes on handling the media as well as broad campaign strategy. The National Secretariat's Tony Ferguson drafted a set of 'suggestions' based on Cameron's research for the 1980 federal election. His 'respectful but blunt' advice, while groundbreaking at the time, would become the accepted standard. Cameron's internal paper, 'An Interpretation of Voter Research', was dated 18 February 1980, while Ferguson's written advice to Caucus frontbenchers was headed simply 'Some Respectful but Blunt Suggestions on Television Appearances by Labor Spokespersons'. It read:

- 1 Remember that the next election will be decided solely on the votes of the 15 per cent of 'swingers' who show any willingness to change.
- 2 Remember that virtually all of them must have voted for Fraser in 1977.
- 3 Remember that, contrary to popular myth, they are *not* discerning upper middle-class professionals who carefully reason through their vote. They are basically ignorant and indifferent about politics. They vote on instinct for superficial, ill-informed and generally selfish reasons.
- 4 They hold politics and politicians in the lowest esteem. They believe

politicians are irrelevant charlatans, and that the country survives *despite* them.

- 5 What small measure of information they receive about politics (and it is *very* small) comes from commercial TV and at the 'well informed' end of the scale, from the Willesee Show.
- 6 Like the rest of Australia, they average 18 hours per week in front of a television, compared with 16 hours listening to radio and 3 hours reading newspapers.
- 7 Overwhelmingly, and in increasing numbers, they regard information from television as more reliable and more accurate, and less biased, than information from newspapers. Radio rates last on this scale. It is purely a background 'entertainment' medium.
- 8 They don't know who you are, and care even less. They're vaguely interested in what the Leader of the ALP stands for, but so far don't have a clue.
- 9 They think Fraser is a fair sort of all-round bastard. Despite this, they will be only *vaguely* interested in voting for Bill Hayden *if*, and only if, they can get some kind of line on him, preferably one involving some sense of hope for Australia's future.
- 10 Giving Bill Hayden some kind of *profile* in the minds of these people, therefore, is the only communications objective that offers the slightest hope of success.
- 11 Because of the indifference of these people, and their information consumption patterns, this objective can be achieved *only* with a minimum number of thoughts repeated the maximum number of times. When you are sick of saying it, they'll just be starting to notice it.
- 12 You have 30–45 seconds (about

- 100 words) maximum, to convey the message once you go on TV.
- 13 When you go on TV, it is *your* interview. You are under no compulsion to answer what you've been asked. You are there to *use* the opportunity to fulfil *our* objectives. You are there to *use* the media. Just as they will use you, if you let them, for their objectives—whether they be political, or

- simply the pursuit of controversy or 'bright' television.
- 14 Remember, 30–45 seconds, say what you want to say, and say it every time you appear.
- 15 If all this seems ridiculously obvious, ask yourself why it is constantly forgotten by Labor spokespeople every time they get in front of a camera.

Alan Ramsey

time, would have caused one of the great political scandals. Labor learnt, in advance, the revenue detail of John Howard's first Budget in 1978, an extremely harsh Budget that modified a number of the government's 1977 election promises, including full tax indexation. It also accelerated petrol excise and introduced a 'temporary' income tax surcharge. Geoff Jackson, an economist Hayden had recruited from Tom Uren's staff, achieved the impossible through a contact in Treasury with whom he lunched each day in the Rose Gardens opposite Old Parliament House in the weeks prior to Budget night. The contact 'leaked' the Budget's revenue measures piece by piece, an incredible decision that risked gaol as well as career. It ensured Labor was never better prepared on Budget night to counter the complex detail of the myriad Budget changes. And it never happened again.³³

A month earlier Gough Whitlam quit politics. John Kerin, defeated in 1975, returned to Parliament in the subsequent post-Budget by-election in Whitlam's western Sydney seat of Werriwa. The anti-government swing was 11.3 per cent. In June 1979 Leo McLeay, a future House Speaker, won the safe Labor inner-Sydney seat of Grayndler with 62 per cent of the primary vote in a by-election after the death of Frank Stewart, yet another former Whitlam minister.

At the beginning of 1980, an election year, Caucus was jolted by a very public split between Hayden and the popular Mick Young, one of his most senior colleagues. Young, Labor's Federal Senior Vice President, held the twin Opposition portfolios of Employment and Industrial Relations. He was also Leader of Opposition Business in the House, a strategically significant parliamentary responsibility. Hayden took this from him after one too many of Mick's long lunches and a growing concern that not a lot was happening in the development of employment policy. Although Hayden later claimed he'd told Young as they were leaving a Federal Executive meeting a few days earlier, an unhappy Young said he only learnt of the change from a journalist. Whoever was right, there was a resultant ugly shouting match by telephone between Adelaide and Canberra, one half of it mostly audible to Hayden's staff. This ended with Hayden shouting down the phone, 'Well, I've told you now!'³⁴

The split remained unhealed for four years. Young lost the Industrial Relations half of his shadow portfolio to Bob Hawke during the election campaign in late 1980. Then, when Hawke (Wills, Vic.) came into Parliament

ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

STATEMENT BY P. J. KEATING, M.P.

The role of New South Wales Centre Unity members in the resolution of the federal Labor leadership has for some days been the subject of media speculation.

As President and Spokesman for the Centre Unity group, I want to make it clear that the group has done all within its power during the course of the current Parliament, to ensure stability in the leadership and in the effective public presentation of the party.

In the lead-up to the Hayden–Hawke leadership ballot on 16 July 1982, the President of the New South Wales branch of the Party, Paul Keating, issued a statement on behalf of the Centre Unity Group (the official name of the New South Wales Right). The day before, the Left had formally agreed to support Hayden (despite an earlier flirtation with Hawke—particularly by Tom Uren). According to Paul Kelly in *The Hawke Ascendancy*, the statement was drafted by Gareth Evans and amended by Keating, then

at 11.30 a.m. Keating stepped into the lift at the Boulevard Hotel, statement in one hand, factional solidarity concealing personal doubt, and pressed the ground-floor button. A few minutes later in the Boulevard foyer he publicly launched his assassination attempt on Hayden; it was the toughest decision in his political career.

Keating's reluctant decision to support Hawke's challenge meant that Hayden's victory in the Caucus ballot two days later was only a stay of execution: the New South Wales Right had swung its numbers, united, behind the challenger and a Hawke leadership was only a matter of time. The Keating statement read:

The role of the New South Wales Centre Unity members in the resolution of the federal Labor leadership has for some days been the subject of media speculation.

As President and Spokesman for the Centre Unity group, I want to make it clear that the group has done all within its power during the course of the current Parliament, to ensure stability in the leadership and in the effective public presentation of the party.

The current situation was brought about by a new factor in the Parliamentary Caucus alignments, and that was an approach by senior figures of the parliamentary left to Bob Hawke to the effect that up to half of the left group in Caucus would be prepared to support a leadership challenge by him on the basis that a Hawke-led party would maximise support for a Labor victory.

It was on this basis that the 'destabilising speculation' arose which prompted Bill Hayden to call Friday's meeting to resolve the matter.

The Centre Unity in New South Wales has always believed that Bill Hayden was right in his approach to the issues of capital gains tax and uranium; but the left did not. It was Bill Hayden's stand on these matters which clearly contributed to the stance originally taken by the left.



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600
TEL 76301

TO ALL MEMBERS OF CAUCUS

Dear Colleague,

I refer you to the press speculation arising from my interview with Michael Schildberger last week, projecting the possibility of a challenge by me to Bill Hayden's leadership before the next election.

While it is true that in the course of the interview I expressed concern about the current standing of the Party in the opinion polls, I refer to that passage in the interview when I said, unequivocally, "I am not making any challenge".

That is and remains my position. I stand by absolutely the commitment I made at the Joint Press Conference on 16 July, where - in answer to the question, "Can you guarantee that there will be no further challenge before the next election?" - I answered, "Yes".

Far from wishing in any way to destabilise the Party, I will continue - as I was last week in South Australia and Tasmania - to campaign vigorously for the Party; and indeed I hope, together with Bill Hayden, to play a major role in ensuring a decisive victory for the Party in the Flinders by-election and the general election whenever it is held.

Yours fraternally

BOB HAWKE

*To all members of Caucus. On 5 November 1982, with the Flinders by-election a month away, Bob Hawke commented about the Opposition's performance, style and priorities on the ABC's **Midday with Schildberger**. Caucus concern over this undermining of Hayden's leadership forced a response from Hawke. On the afternoon of 8 November, an undated letter addressed 'Dear Colleague' was distributed to all members of Caucus.*

The left has now made it clear that it is resiling from any commitment tendered to Bob Hawke on its behalf. It made this decision after having been brought into line by interests outside the ALP.

The Centre Unity group in New South Wales finds the involvement by Messrs Carmichael and Halfpenny, in the leadership of the Labor Party, totally unacceptable.

Not only has the left jeopardised the unity and solidarity of the Caucus by its offer to Mr Hawke but, in responding to pressure from Messrs Carmichael and Halfpenny, have left the party open to a charge of outside influence.

The Centre Unity group was originally prepared to ensure, in the best interests of the party, that the successful candidate won by a decisive margin. However, in the situation now obtaining, Centre Unity group members are placed

in the invidious public position of appearing to follow the lead of the left, which has in turn been dictated by Messrs Carmichael, Halfpenny and their associates outside the Labor Party.

In the circumstances it is no longer appropriate that New South Wales members be bound by their original attitude.

The Centre Unity group respects Bill Hayden's capacity and contribution to the Labor movement and will support him absolutely, without reservations, in the event that he wins Friday's ballot.

I believe, however, that the New South Wales members will take the view that the best interests of the Labor Party, and the millions of Australians who deserve and need a Labor victory and the end of Fraserism, will be best served by Bob Hawke now becoming leader.

that election, Hayden gave him the Employment half too. Young was demoted to Immigration. Then and there, if not earlier, Mick Young became a potent force in Caucus' Hawke-for-Leader lobby. In 1983, with Labor in office, Young in turn fell out with Hawke over some foolishness on his part in the events surrounding the Ivanov Royal Commission, mainly his garrulous indiscretion one night in a Canberra car park with an old Labor mate, Eric Walsh, a lobbyist. Young and Hayden, thrown together by political necessity, subsequently mended their differences in the formation early in 1984 of the parliamentary Centre Left faction. Yet their personal relationship was never the same.

The month after the split with Young, Hayden increased his frontbench by two, with Caucus electing Neal Blewett and Stewart West (Cunningham, NSW), the latter having come into Parliament by winning the by-election that followed Rex Connor's death three years earlier. Senator Doug McClelland, on the New South Wales Right's ticket with John Brown, was defeated yet again in a Caucus frontbench ballot. In Hayden's shake-up of portfolio responsibilities Blewett was made Health spokesman, displacing the idiosyncratic Sydney MP Dick Klugman, a personal friend of Hayden's. Klugman took the move badly, complaining publicly that a 'particular group has been trying to get rid of me'.³⁵ So keenly was his demotion felt by his family that one of Klugman's daughters scribbled all over a photo of Hayden before mailing it with a note to Hayden's office.³⁶

The general election of October 1980 began strongly for Labor, built around the campaign imagery of the leadership troika of Hayden, Hawke and Wran. It could not be sustained, least of all against an hysterical Coalition advertising blitz about a supposed Labor wealth tax. Labor proposed no such tax, but Hayden had pledged an inquiry into wealth after the Caucus economic committee, headed by Ralph Willis, had spent a year haggling over a capital gains tax without reaching any resolution. Fraser exploited the vacuum brilliantly in the campaign. Some weeks after the election, the December morning after John Lennon was shot dead in New York, Hayden arrived at John Curtin House in Canberra for the last meeting of the year of Labor's Federal Executive. A waiting journalist asked if he had any comment on John Lennon's death. 'John who?' replied Hayden.³⁷ His puzzled query, whether from ignorance or his poor hearing, suggested as much about Labor's election defeat as most anything else: Hayden, quite wrongly, forever gave the public impression of being little involved in the real world.

Yet while falling short of delivering Labor into office, the 1980 election halved the government's majority, from 48 to 23. Labor won 14 Coalition seats, including 7 in Victoria, on a national primary vote swing of 5.5 per cent, but conceded a seat to the National Party in New South Wales.³⁸ Indeed, New South Wales, the most populous state, was the ALP's big disappointment: a net gain of a solitary seat, a result matched by the tiny ACT with its two seats. Six of the Caucus newcomers would eventually become ministers, two of them Labor leaders: Hawke and Kim Beazley Jnr (Swan, WA). The others were Michael Duffy (Holt, Vic.), Ros Kelly (Canberra, ACT), Bob Brown (Hunter, NSW) and Ross Free (Macquarie, NSW).

In the Caucus leadership elections that followed, Hayden and Bowen were re-elected unopposed. John Button took over the Senate leadership from Ken

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This front page from the local newspaper in Bill Hayden's home town of Ipswich highlights the trauma of Hayden's resignation as Leader. (Queensland Times, 7 February 1983)

Wriedt, well beaten in the Hobart seat of Denison in his attempt to transfer to the House of Representatives. In the only leadership ballot, Tasmania's Senator Don Grimes retained the same eastern states make-up of the leadership by defeating New South Wales' perennial loser, Doug McClelland, 39 to 37, to become Deputy to Button. The outcome infuriated the New South Wales Right and, behind the scenes, intensified sentiment over Hayden's leadership. Both Bob Hawke and Paul Keating had lobbied strongly for McClelland yet the symbolic victory for Hayden did little to win him respect.³⁹ In the ballot for the new frontbench, Keating and Willis topped the voting with 66 votes. Hawke finished well down in twelfth place with 53 votes, one behind Mick Young.⁴⁰ Former frontbenchers Moss Cass, Ted Innes, Barry Cohen and Dick Klugman were dropped, and Doug Everingham did not re-contest. The six newcomers—including the vacancy created by Ken Wriedt—were Hawke, John Brown, John Dawkins, John Kerin, Barry Jones and Senator Gareth Evans (Vic.).

Caucus then underwent two years of remorseless leadership tensions. As throughout Hayden's five years as leader, he was always under immense pressure to win, whatever the issue or contest, however unreal the expectations. In March 1982, Labor's Michael Maher took the Sydney seat of Lowe from the Liberals in a by-election caused by the resignation of William McMahon, a former Prime Minister. The two-party preferred shift to Labor was 8.5 per cent, the largest by-election swing to Labor in a seat that changed hands since Corio in 1967.⁴¹ Yet still it was not enough to dampen leadership speculation.

Neither was Hayden's tactical move in inviting a Caucus leadership

challenge by Hawke five months later and winning it, against the odds, 43 votes to 38, after Tom Uren, furious over his defeat by Hayden and his allies on uranium policy at that year's National Conference, tried and failed to deliver the Caucus Left vote to Hawke. Uren turned up in Hayden's office after the ballot at the cutting of a celebratory cake, delivered by an admiring Parliament House chef. So, too, for appearances' sake, did Hawke. But it was only Uren who walked into the office and kissed Hayden on the forehead, saying, sheepishly: 'Sorry, Billy. I've been a bastard.'⁴² And four months later, when Phillip Lynch, Malcolm Fraser's former deputy, resigned his Melbourne seat of Flinders, the Party pressures on Hayden's besieged leadership became terminal after Peter Reith, in December 1982, retained the seat for the government on the back of Fraser's proposed wage freeze, despite a 3 per cent swing to Labor.

By Christmas Hayden's support in Caucus was shredding. Even John Button, unwavering for five years, shifted ground. He now agreed with Hawke's allies to talk to Hayden in the New Year about standing down. Button's intention was immediately leaked to the press.⁴³ The story became an instant frenzy. Eventually, after two harrowing meetings in Brisbane, Hayden publicly surrendered the leadership on Thursday, 3 February 1983, at his memorable 'drover's dog' press conference. That morning, in his Brisbane office, Hayden had completed terms and conditions at an emotional meeting with Hawke, Bowen and Button. Later, after his dramatic announcement to the press, Hayden returned to his office, went into the small adjoining bathroom, shut the door and wept long, wracking sobs.⁴⁴ Within the hour, Malcolm Fraser, who had been trying since late morning to seize the tactical initiative, announced, too late, the early election on 5 March that would sweep Labor into thirteen years of office.

LABOR IN POWER: 1983–96

Mike Steketee

The first Caucus of the Hawke Government met in Old Parliament House on 10 March 1983 in an atmosphere very different from that which greeted its Labor predecessor in 1972. Then there was elation and more: after 23 years of conservative rule, a sense of destiny, high ideals and strong faith in a government led by a figure of commanding presence. In 1983, Labor took the reins in a much more sober mood.

The new Hawke Government's majority was larger than Whitlam's—25 seats compared to 9. It was, the Prime Minister-elect told that first meeting, the largest Labor majority since Federation, which was true, although it gave less than full credit to Bob Hawke's hero, John Curtin, who won a 23-seat majority in 1943 in a House of Representatives with 75 members, compared to 125 in 1983. Hawke also told his fellow MPs that the Party had achieved its highest primary vote since 1914. This might have been accurate on the figures then to hand but not on the final count, which showed Labor's first preference vote of 49.5 per cent behind that of Curtin's 50.6 per cent in 1943, Evatt's 50 per cent in 1954, Chifley's 49.7 per cent in 1946 and Whitlam's 49.6 per cent in 1972. Hawke pointed out that record numbers of women and representatives from regional areas had been elected and that it was the first time Labor had been in power in Canberra and four of the states since 1947.¹

Yet no quibbling over the detail of figures can obscure an impressive result for a party which had suffered defeats of such magnitude in 1975 and 1977 that its very survival was questioned by some. This made all the more notable the cautious, even slightly apprehensive mood in which the new government took office. On election night Hawke had said that Australians wanted 'calmness and

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The Victor. Bob Hawke in the tally room after leading Labor to a decisive win in the 1983 election. (Australian Information Service, private collection, Bob Hawke)

a sense of assuredness'.² There seemed to be no revolution stirring here, socialist or otherwise. He drew a clear and deliberate contrast with Gough Whitlam, who had injected urgency in Labor's reform program while waiting for the final election results by having himself and deputy Lance Barnard sworn in to a two-man Ministry which proceeded to announce decisions at breakneck speed. If in exaggerated form, the altered tone was captured by the *Sun* in Sydney two days after the 1983 election with the headline 'FIRST MOVES—Hawke hides away to study cash worry'. It reported that the Prime Minister-elect had gone into seclusion to study official papers, which included the 'disturbing' news that the Budget deficit had blown out, forcing him to reconsider his election program.³ Economic policy, a weakness of the Whitlam Government, would receive absolute priority under this Labor government.

Two decisions made at the beginning by Hawke set the parameters for the relationship of Caucus to the rest of the Party. The first was that there would be a Cabinet of thirteen, comprising the four parliamentary leaders and nine others chosen by them (although in practice principally by Hawke), within the Ministry of 27 elected by the Caucus. The second was that ministers, including those in the outer Ministry, who participated in specific Cabinet decisions would be bound by them in Caucus. Arguably, no other two measures have had such a fundamental effect on the workings of a Labor government. In a strictly formal sense, they preserved the supremacy of Caucus in decision-making by the Parliamentary Party. In practice, they weakened its authority greatly. They locked ministers into an economic policy which broke sharply with previous Labor tradition and was determined by a minority of ministers, in particular Hawke, Treasurer Paul Keating, Employment Minister Ralph Willis, Finance Minister John Dawkins and the fellow West Australian who was to succeed him, Peter Walsh. The authority of Cabinet spilled over into the Ministry and down to Caucus. Science Minister Barry Jones asked Communications Minister Michael

BOB HAWKE'S CAUCUS

Bob Hawke, Labor's longest serving Prime Minister, basks in triumphal acclaim in June 1989. (New South Wales Branch, Australian Labor Party)

If I may pursue the infamous botanical metaphor of the difference between a cactus and a Caucus, I knew when I entered the Caucus in 1980 that life wasn't going to be a bed of roses. For some, I knew it would be a case of cutting down a tall poppy who, for the previous eleven years, had been head of the ACTU and, for five years (1973–78) Federal President of the ALP. But, overwhelmingly, the impression I formed was that of men and women committed to working hard inside and outside the Parliament for the election of a Labor Government.

There was a real division among the factions, but the closer we came to the election of 1983, the more the realisation of the need for unity came to predominate. When I achieved leadership of the Party in February 1983, I had behind me a Caucus I knew would fight with its collective strength to win the election announced on the same day, and would, after the election, operate to sustain Labor in office.

The Whitlam Government had done many good things, but it did not provide an acceptable model of the relationship between Cabinet and Caucus. Too often ministers defeated in Cabinet went back for

a second innings in Caucus. I knew the Caucus welcomed strong leadership but, at the same time, did not want to be or appear to be merely a cipher for the Prime Minister or Cabinet. The secret to our success in the management of our affairs lay, I believe, in three related practices. First, whenever possible—the great majority of cases—before any major decisions were considered by Cabinet, Caucus and its relevant committees were given the opportunity to formulate their views. Second, there was an absolute rule of Cabinet solidarity in Caucus in support of decisions taken in Cabinet. And, third, to justify that solidarity, ministers were given exhaustive—and sometimes exhausting—opportunities to argue their position in Cabinet. Added to those practices was a continuing process of consultation with factional leaders.

I do not claim that these nine years were free of tension with and within Caucus. But I do assert that four successive electoral victories and a proud record of Labor achievement were a product, among other factors, of a Caucus that for good reason respected itself and was respected by government.

Bob Hawke

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*Caucus met on 11 March
1983 after Labor regained
government with a
majority of 25 seats in the
House of Representatives.
(Australian Information
Service, private collection,
Bob Hawke)*

Duffy on one occasion after an economic policy announcement following a meeting of the full Ministry: 'How did that happen?' 'It's purely a matter of numbers,' Duffy replied. 'There's four of them and only 23 of us.'⁴

The decisions on an inner Cabinet and Cabinet solidarity were a reaction to the experience of the Whitlam Government, in which all ministers were members of Cabinet and those defeated in Cabinet could marshal their resources to try to reverse the decision in Caucus. This might have been democratic, it might have been in line with the principles of the Party for authority to flow up from the rank and file, but it caused practical problems in government, not least a public perception of division. Hawke, who had dealt with, and differed from, the Whitlam Government as ACTU President, was particularly conscious of these weaknesses. It was an exaggeration but the view he expressed in his own biography was that 'Whitlam presided over a Cabinet which was in a permanent shambles' and which 'was far too big and unwieldy' and over a government 'continuously rent by a lack of Cabinet solidarity'.⁵ Hawke subsequently elaborated: 'There was a firm feeling amongst all of us who witnessed or knew about that period. When we started to have discussions when we were preparing to go into government, I said we weren't going to tolerate that and everyone agreed.'⁶

This emphasis on the process of government, and on economic policy, reflected the degree to which the Hawke Government was seized with the need to secure its own future. There remained in the back of Labor minds the concern that its legitimacy as a government had to be established in a way that had never been achieved under Whitlam. Moreover, there was a desire to entrench Labor policies and, some like Paul Keating dared hope, to go further to establish Labor as the natural party of government, as had been done to a large extent in states such as New South Wales.

From the very first meeting, Hawke stressed the importance of Caucus discipline and reinforced it with as broad a hint as it is possible for a Prime Minister to give—that the next election was not too far away. The Minutes record his telling Caucus that ‘at the end of 1984 there would be an election for at least half the Senate’. At the same meeting, Hawke sought Caucus approval for his decision on the thirteen-member Cabinet, stressing that non-Cabinet members would be entitled to full participation in Cabinet discussions involving their portfolios and that full Ministry meetings would be held not less than once each quarter. Even though this was proposed by a leader with the full authority of an election victory behind him, such a significant step could not be expected to proceed completely unchallenged. The Left’s Senator John Coates (Tas.) argued that Hawke’s motion would entail a change of rules and notice of it should be given for debate at a subsequent meeting. Chair Harry Jenkins (Scullin, Vic.) ruled that it was in order to deal with the issue immediately, prompting Coates to move that it be referred to the task force on government administration. He was supported in the debate by Doug Everingham and Senator Bruce Childs (NSW) and opposed by Senator Gareth Evans, Ros Kelly and Hawke, with Hawke’s motion carrying the day on the voices.⁷ It was a Left–Right division which gave an early indication of the underlying tensions within the government. Hawke told the media afterwards that the overwhelming argument for an inner Cabinet was ‘efficiency more than anything, which is going to be the hallmark of the Government’.⁸ Yet again the Prime Minister was drawing a deliberate public distinction between his government and that of his Labor predecessor.

There was another fundamental difference between the attitudes of the Caucus in 1972 and 1983. Unlike Whitlam, who had spent the previous twenty years in Caucus, Hawke remained to a significant degree the outsider. He had not entered Parliament until 1980. In sections of the Caucus, namely the Left and what was to become the Centre Left, there was still a resentment that Hawke had replaced Bill Hayden as Leader, not for the ideology or policies he offered but for reasons of sheer pragmatism: Hawke would make an election victory more likely. Moreover, from the very start, there was tension over a leader who was more conservative than the party he represented. This in itself was not unusual in the Labor Party but in Hawke’s case it extended to a suspicion, if not a conviction, in sections of the Party that he was too pro-American and too pro-business to be an authentic Labor leader.

The early period of the Hawke Government saw repeated jostling for influence between the Caucus and the Executive. Speaking on Timor, Ken Fry (Fraser, ACT) stressed at the second meeting of Caucus the need for consultation with Caucus committees on policy. According to the Caucus Minutes, ‘Bob Hawke replied that he could not give a categorical statement that no decision would be taken without consultation with Caucus committees. However, he emphasised the importance of discussion with the Caucus committees . . .’. Foreign Minister Hayden qualified the commitment further by stating ‘that it was important that Caucus realise that in government many decisions would have to be made quickly’.⁹ On its side, the backbench had Party rules on the

supremacy of Caucus, and tradition. But the Executive had the actual responsibility of decision-making and the public authority of ministers.

In practice, these tensions generally were resolved by breaking the rules on Caucus consultation up to, but just short of, the point where they threatened a serious revolt. Members often sought, but seldom received, assurances of consultation on major economic decisions, particularly budgets and economic statements. Ministers readily resorted to the need for confidentiality, including for commercial reasons, to deny Caucus input. In reality, they were reluctant to subject to the scrutiny of a body as large as Caucus many tough decisions made in a climate of economic stringency. Caucus gradually came to tolerate, if not necessarily fully accept, this situation. Its capitulation to the Executive on Budget matters is epitomised by the full minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 1984:

Meeting opened at 6.45 p.m., John Mildren in the chair. Paul Keating reported on the Budget to be brought down. Bob Hawke congratulated the Treasurer on the Budget. MEETING CLOSED AT 7.30 p.m.

But if the backbench was willing, in the interests of government unity and smooth decision-making, to be flexible in asserting its rights, it also was prepared to set limits. Hawke discovered this over the agreement he gave the Reagan administration for US aircraft to use an RAAF airfield to help monitor tests, involving a splashdown in the Tasman Sea, of a new generation of nuclear weapons—Missile Experimental or the MX, as it came to be known. It was an issue that captured perfectly both the tension in the ALP over the American relationship and the practical difficulties of government-by-Caucus. Labor's Left included an anti-American streak which extended to a concern in other sections of the Party about the Reagan Administration's aggressive disposition on defence matters. But Hawke, once again in a reaction to the experiences of the Whitlam Government, saw it as a priority to cultivate good relations with the United States, to banish the perception in Washington that Labor governments could not be trusted. So he readily agreed to cooperate with the Reagan Administration over the MX, despite the government's official policy of opposing the development and testing of new missile systems which could contribute to the arms race. Hawke's consultations on the issue in Australia were minimal and certainly did not involve the Caucus or Cabinet. 'That was a solo flight by Hawke,' was how one minister at the time recalled it. 'To be frank, there was a hell of a lot of anxiety about it within the Cabinet that transcended any boundary between Caucus and government.'¹⁰

Even then, the controversy might have been contained had it not been for an article by Brian Toohey in the *National Times*. Hawke, in Brussels on a trip which would take him on to Washington, received a phone call from Graham Richardson (Senator, NSW) briefing him on the spreading outrage in the Party rank and file and the backbench and advising him to back down. By the time he reached Washington, he was left in the humiliating position of having to rely on the help of US Secretary of State George Shultz, whom he called a friend, to withdraw the request for Australian assistance. It was a rare occasion

in the Hawke and Keating Governments where the Prime Minister had to publicly bow to the wishes of Caucus.

That left him to face the music at home. On 19 March 1985, Paul Keating reported to Caucus on the deliberations of the so-called Kirribilli Committee, which had sprung from a meeting of the full Ministry at the Prime Minister's Sydney residence to frame a response to the MX controversy. Caucus adopted a motion that had been the subject of extensive negotiation between the factions and enshrined the principle of consultation demanded by the back-bench, while also providing for plenty of flexibility to satisfy ministers. It said the business of government was to be organised 'on the basis of maximum possible consultation between Ministers and Caucus consistent with the principles of Cabinet government'. Ministers were to attend relevant Caucus meetings regularly, arrange briefings and initiate discussions of policy proposals 'at the earliest practicable stage'. The cover sheets of Cabinet submissions were to record the extent and outcome of consultations.¹¹

Views among Labor MPs about the effectiveness of these arrangements varied all the way from allegations of window dressing and tokenism to claims that they were a key to the unity of the Hawke Government. According to Neal Blewett, a supporter of Hayden as Leader and later Keating and a senior minister throughout the period of the Hawke Government and for the first part of the Keating Government: 'I think the Kirribilli agreement is one part of Hawke's management of the party which will be seen increasingly as one of his great achievements.' Blewett's broader argument is that Hawke deserves credit for presiding over fundamental shifts in Labor policy without splitting the Party, as happened in New Zealand.¹² Certainly in the early period of government, this was not out of the question in a party with a rich history of splits. Hawke's strength was as a political manager of government business, a Cabinet chairman who allowed all views to be aired, who gave substantial latitude to ministers in the running of their portfolios and who consulted extensively with key Caucus members.

Yet Hawke began his prime ministership with a stronger factional affiliation than most leaders. The Right, and particularly the New South Wales Right with the prominent involvement of numbers men such as Graham Richardson, were crucial to his becoming Leader. Although Labor leaders traditionally stay above the factional fray, Hawke continued in the early years of government to identify closely with the Right, including attendance at some of its faction meetings. On top of this was the open warfare he conducted against the Left, particularly the Victorian Left and old enemies such as Bill Hartley, whose anti-Americanism and strong backing for the Palestine Liberation Organisation clashed with Hawke's support for the United States and his passionate commitment to Israel.

With Hawke and other strong right-wing figures such as Keating dominating the government, the position of the Left in the early years is perhaps best described as being in government but not of it. Stewart West, the only left-wing member of the first Hawke Cabinet, resigned within eight months because he could not support a Cabinet decision on uranium mining. The national Left, a broader grouping than the Parliamentary Party but with Caucus members playing a prominent part, periodically held news conferences that criticised the actions of the government, particularly on economic policy. The Left's senior

minister, Brian Howe, accused the government on one occasion of having a 'deficit fetish'¹³ and on another of a set of policies that were like a mule: they were an infertile hybrid of minor reform with a strong faith in free enterprise, and had no future.¹⁴

Gradually the relationship changed. Hartley was expelled from the Labor Party and the hard left Builders' Labourers Federation was deregistered. Hawke's instinct to look for common ground rather than differences culminated in his invitation to Howe in 1987 to join the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) of Cabinet—the engine room of economic policy-making. It was a decision that Keating strongly opposed, fearing it would provide an opportunity to elevate the Left's influence. For Howe it involved a major reassessment. As Social Security Minister, he was in charge of the largest single area of government spending, which inevitably meant he was a target for savings in an era of tight Budgets. By joining the group implementing the detail of the very economic policy he had been criticising, he ran the risk of being suborned. On the other hand, he had to face the reality that he did not carry the numbers to change the fundamental direction of policy. Howe resolved the dilemma by deciding he was better off inside the tent than outside, to borrow the characterisation once used by US President Lyndon Johnson. Howe accepted Hawke's invitation and became an active participant in the ERC, offering savings in his own portfolio and others in return for concessions on his spending priorities. It changed the dynamics of the Hawke Government, with the Left now part of the government not just formally but in reality. In fact, it was the Left in later years on which Hawke relied to try to save his leadership as other sections of the Party switched their support to Keating.

Hawke's early association with the Right provoked another defensive reaction. The group in the middle of the Party was left feeling vulnerable, particularly since it included vanquished leader Bill Hayden and his supporters. Key figures such as Dawkins, Blewett and South Australian Party Secretary and later Senator Chris Schacht (SA) canvassed with Hayden the idea of setting up a new faction. The moves culminated in the creation of the Centre Left in February 1984. Sometimes referred to as the 'lonely hearts club' and the 'Hayden protection society', it began as an anti-faction faction designed primarily to protect those on the front bench, or likely to be, who were not part of the Right or the Left. The faction's strongest representation came from the smaller states, where the Right and the Left had a less powerful hold than in New South Wales and Victoria and where concern about attempts to spread their influence through national organisations was greatest.

In the Caucus, the Centre Left was potentially a formidable force. It held the balance of power and included many of the figures who made the Hawke Cabinets especially talented. Apart from Hayden, they included John Dawkins, Peter Walsh, Mick Young and Neal Blewett, together with John Button as a fellow traveller. It prided itself on not binding its members on policy issues in the same way as the other factions, although discipline was enforced in ballots for ministerial or other positions. In practice, the Centre Left sided most often with the Right, particularly on economic policy, on which ministers such as Walsh and Dawkins often took a harder line than those from the Right. The

faction's attitude in other policy areas was more fluid. Its heyday was after the 1987 election, when it claimed about 28 members in a Caucus of 118. But particularly after the departure of Hayden, Young, Walsh, Dawkins and Blewett, it declined as a force and its numbers when Labor returned to Opposition in 1996 fell to about fifteen. According to internal critics, it changed to a body less concerned about debating policy and more about securing ministerial positions, trips and other perks. It also suffered from the lack of a strong base in the unions and state parties.

The formation of the Centre Left resulted in the hardening of factional lines in the Caucus to the point where there were only about half a dozen members of Caucus who were genuinely independent. Factionalism became a hallmark of the Hawke Government. It proved to be a blessing for the management of decision-making within the government, as many issues were sorted out in negotiations between factional leaders, if necessary with the involvement of Hawke and, later, Keating. The government was fortunate that the faction leaders included figures with impressive political skills such as Graham Richardson and Robert Ray (Senator, Vic.) on the Right, Gerry Hand (Melbourne, Vic.) on the Left and Peter Cook (Senator, WA) in the Centre Left. The bluff Richardson, like Keating schooled in the hard ways of the New South Wales Right, took to the task with particular relish: he described the first time he worked the numbers for Hawke in Caucus on a difficult issue as 'better than sex and almost as exciting as a good feed'.¹⁵

The formalising of the factions further reduced the role of Caucus, which tended to act more as a final court of appeal for members who could not be accommodated by debate within their own factions and negotiations between faction leaders. The degree of Caucus involvement varied according to the policy area and the attitude and position of the responsible minister. Outside the economic area, ministers tended to have a close working relationship with their Caucus committees. Committees often became the vehicle for carrying difficult decisions through the Caucus: if a minister and his or her committee could reach agreement, then it was unlikely there would be either the interest or impetus in the rest of Cabinet or Caucus to head in a different direction. Other contentious issues were sent off to working parties which were given the task of producing an outcome acceptable to most, if not all. The attitude of ministers also depended on their position within the Party: Paul Keating as Treasurer and Prime Minister was haphazard in his consultation but had the authority and ultimately the persuasive power to get his way.

Just because a process had been established did not mean the tension between Caucus and the Executive ended. Two months after Caucus adopted the Kirribilli motion, the Left complained that a decision on local government funding had breached the Party Platform and Caucus passed a resolution saying discussions should be held between the Kirribilli Committee and committee chairs 'to address the shortcomings of the Committee system'.¹⁶

It was the latent power of Caucus that counted. When Industry Minister John Button told Robert Ray he had obtained a Cabinet decision on assistance to the clothing industry following tariff cuts, Ray responded: 'I don't care what you've got—I've got a Caucus majority'.¹⁷ Button went back to Cabinet and

returned with a modified package. On budgetary matters the Caucus was often presented with a *fait accompli* by being briefed on decisions immediately before the Treasurer's Budget speech to Parliament. But this did not result automatically in Cabinet getting its way. A decision announced in the 1991 Budget to impose a \$2.50 front-end charge or co-payment for a visit to the doctor was challenged in Caucus as undermining the principles of Medicare. A Caucus committee review of the decision led to its abandonment.

Caucus remained the final point of reference within the FPLP for many of the major decisions taken during an era of fundamental reforms. All legislation had to be approved by Caucus, although the detailed scrutiny was carried out by Caucus committees. This gave Caucus carriage, for example, of a national health insurance scheme under Medicare, the creation of a national superannuation system and native title legislation flowing from the Mabo decision. But it also meant that Caucus had no say in some major non-legislative measures, such as that at the end of 1983 to float the dollar—arguably the most fundamental decision taken by the Hawke and Keating Governments and one with ramifications for the conduct of virtually all other policy. The Economic Summit in April 1983 set the tone for many subsequent measures by the Hawke Government but excluded Caucus as well as Parliament. So did the Tax Summit in 1985, although Caucus had to give legislative approval to the changes flowing from it.

While Caucus could propose, it was up to the leadership and Cabinet to dispose. Taxation of wealth is a case in point. A touchstone issue for many in the Labor Party, it was raised persistently in Caucus and just as determinedly fobbed off by a leadership concerned about scaring the electoral horses. An inquiry into wealth was Party policy and the Left, with the support of some others, was keen to pursue it. The Left's Gerry Hand asked in Caucus in February 1984 about the timing of such an inquiry and elicited a promise from Hawke that he would have a timetable within a week. Thirteen months later, he 'gave a commitment to report to the next meeting of Caucus regarding the wealth inquiry' and three weeks later promised that 'a statement is in the process of being prepared for Cabinet'. Cabinet apparently had more pressing matters to consider because two years further on, in October 1987, the Prime Minister said he would report on a wealth inquiry to the next meeting of Caucus at which he was present. He did, after a fashion, saying three weeks later that a report had been received and he would be examining it. The issue was finally buried in December 1987, when Hawke gave Caucus a lengthy excuse based on a report by officials that

had concluded that information on wealth could not be derived from existing sources and that a comprehensive survey would encounter a number of technical difficulties. Further, the earliest timetable would require a feasibility study in early 1989 and a full survey in the first half of 1990. He believed that the issue should not be allowed to drag on and pointed to the existence of wealth related taxes in Australia and measures already in place in the tax system.¹⁸

Behind the scenes, the Left had reached an accommodation with Hawke who, in return for the faction dropping its agitation for a wealth inquiry, agreed to implement a social justice policy.

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Bob Hawke with Caucus officers during the last Caucus meeting at Old Parliament House in May 1988. Left to right: Bob Chynoweth (Deputy Chair), Bob Brown (Chair) and Ross Free (Secretary). (Private collection, Bob Chynoweth)

Like most Labor administrations, the Hawke Government had to combat perceptions that it was breaching Party traditions. But the criticisms had a particular edge because many of the economic decisions it took represented a reversal of previous policy, were supported by the Opposition and followed trends overseas, particularly by the Thatcher Government and the Reagan Administration. After the 1987 election, the government started moves to sell public assets, a process which culminated in the merger and then sale of Qantas and Australian Airlines, together with the Commonwealth Bank and smaller bodies such as the Australian Industries Development Corporation and the Housing Loans Insurance Corporation. To some in the Party, the sale of these institutions, mainly established by Labor governments to provide services for Australians that returned profits to the public purse, represented a grievous breach of Labor principles. Hawke and other ministers tried to distinguish their actions from the asset sales by the Thatcher Government on the grounds that there were higher priorities for government resources than supporting institutions such as airlines. But it had trouble making headway with these arguments, particularly at Party gatherings where the socialist objective still held an emotional appeal, even if it had long ago lost its relevance to modern-day government.

Then there was fiscal policy. Most of the first five years of government involved the hard grind of cutting expenditure and bringing down the Budget deficit. In August 1988 Treasurer Paul Keating briefed the Caucus on a Budget which he said represented the culmination of five years' work and which he told a later news conference 'brings home the bacon'.¹⁹ It included an estimated surplus of \$5.5 billion, a public sector borrowing requirement of zero and a fall in government spending of 1.8 per cent that reduced the government sector to the same proportion of the nation's income as in 1973. But not everyone in the Party could feel quite the same pride as the Treasurer in his achievement, even though it included a reorientation of government spending towards Labor priorities such as welfare, education and health.

THE LEADERSHIP BATTLE

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Bob Hawke and Paul Keating at the Premier's Conference in May 1991. Nailing down Caucus votes for the leadership ballot three days later was put on hold. (Canberra Times)

If Caucus seemed on occasions almost incidental to government decisions, it was central to those concerning the leadership of the Party. Bob Hawke had a long and close association with the labour movement and an even more intense affinity with the Australian public. But he was a relative newcomer to the Caucus: he became a federal MP in 1980, eleven years after Paul Keating, never achieved Keating's mastery over Parliament and retained some of the outsider's perspective on parliamentary politics. Hawke came to the Caucus with one unambiguous goal—to become Leader—but almost to the day that he took the job, there were sceptics who said that the Caucus would not accept an outsider imposed on them, regardless of his achievements and standing, and that he would have to earn his spurs in Canberra like everyone else.

In the event, he became not only Labor's most successful federal leader but also the Party's first Prime Minister to be

voted out by the Caucus. Probably neither, and certainly not the latter, would have happened without Paul Keating. Mercurial, driven, a brilliant schemer, an acute judge of character, he was at once brawler and charmer, intimidating and inspirational. In 1982, he had been a reluctant convert to the Hawke leadership, dragged along by the New South Wales Party of which he was the leading member. Even then, at age 38, he had been fixed on his own ambitions for the leadership. His relationship with Hawke grew close in the early years of government, both personally and professionally, but his impatience increased as well.

Tension over the leadership did not emerge publicly to any significant extent until 1988, when John Dawkins, once a Keating rival but by then his closest ministerial supporter, went to see Hawke to suggest he make way for Keating. It seemed presumptuous, since Hawke had created history only the previous year by becoming

the first Labor Prime Minister to win a third term. But the pressure on Hawke grew and culminated in November 1988 in the Kirribilli agreement, in which Hawke pledged to make way for Keating in the term following another Labor victory. After Hawke won his fourth term in March 1990, he refused to give Keating a commitment on when he would go. Keating's frustration occasionally showed, such as when he made an off-the-record speech to the 1990 Press Gallery dinner likening himself to Plácido Domingo and saying Australia had not had any great leaders.

The dishonouring of the Kirribilli agreement by Hawke became a weapon in Keating's two leadership challenges in 1991. Graham Richardson's leaking of the agreement to Channel 9's Laurie Oakes was aimed at increasing the pressure on Hawke and his supporters. But before that it was the recession which dragged Hawke down. It was a recession over which Keating had presided as Treasurer, its political impact exacerbated by his remark that it was 'the recession that we had to have'. But Hawke also bore responsibility, his confidence that economic policy was on track reflected in his Leader's reports to Caucus meetings. The recession sent the government down in the polls and raised real doubts over whether Labor could win another term. There is nothing which concentrates the minds of MPs quite so much as the prospect of a heavy loss of seats at the next election.

The dilemma for Caucus was that Hawke not only had an impressive track record but also that Keating, for all his inspirational qualities, for all the leadership he had shown on economic policy, for all his devastating style in Parliament, was unpopular among Australians to the point, many argued, of being electoral poison. Indeed, this was the basis of Hawke's strongest argument for breaking the Kirribilli agreement and retaining the leadership: Keating could never win an election, whereas he could. Hawke had

another point in his favour—he was Prime Minister and Keating had to take the job from him, something which had never been done. When it comes to the leadership, Caucus is a conservative body: it resisted Hawke in 1982 and defended him for much of 1991.

Keating, on the other hand, had one major advantage. The persistent speculation about a challenge, in the Caucus as well as the media, and the falling polls acted like a slow drip on Hawke, relentlessly wearing down his credibility and authority. When Keating finally moved, in May 1991, he came through the front door. In Paul Kelly's account in *The End of Certainty* (1992), confirmed in Hawke's biography, Keating told Hawke in his office: 'I told you a long time ago that if I ever organised against you that you'd be the first to know. I'm telling you I will now organise against you.' Hawke and his supporters assessed the numbers and threw down the gauntlet to Keating immediately, calling a Caucus meeting for 8 am the next day.

For all the solidifying of factional politics in the preceding years, this was a ballot that crossed factional boundaries. Centre Left members supported Keating by a margin of about 15 to 5. The Right was divided, with New South Wales, led by Graham Richardson, backing Keating overwhelmingly, while Victoria, organised by Robert Ray, stuck predominantly with Hawke. It was a vote which had very little to do with policy or ideology and almost everything to do with pragmatism and personality. The New South Wales Right backed Keating instinctively, out of mateship and tribal loyalty. Ray's judgement was that Keating could not win an election but before that, he and Keating had developed an animosity, based on Keating's low opinion of Ray and Ray's preparedness, rare amongst his colleagues, to take on Keating in Cabinet. The Left endorsed a vote for Hawke and had an understanding that Brian Howe would be Deputy Prime Minister under Hawke. But Frank Walker,

Stewart West and Peter Duncan backed Keating. From the 1960s to the early 1980s, there had been no more combative opponents in the New South Wales ALP than Keating and Walker. But this new alliance was no more surprising than that of Hawke with the mainstream Left, which had regarded him as an ogre. Time heals all wounds, it seems, even in a Labor Party with a fearsome reputation for hating.

For such a momentous event, the Caucus meeting became an occasion of low farce. Hawke told the assembled MPs that Keating had said the previous day he would challenge for the leadership and he was now giving him the opportunity to do so. In other words, Hawke was putting the onus on Keating to move to have the leadership declared vacant. Keating responded that Bill Hayden in 1982 had declared his own position vacant. He understood there had been discussions about preselections, particularly in Queensland, and he did not believe there should be an open vote. He called on Hawke to resign to allow a secret ballot. Hawke hesitated and then refused, leaving this special meeting of Caucus without any business to transact. Fifteen minutes after the meeting began, Keating and his supporters walked out of the Caucus room in the knowledge that they were short of the numbers but would live to fight another day. The Hawke group quickly realised they had miscalculated and Hawke called another Caucus meeting for 10 am, at which he said it was in the Party's best interests for the leadership question to be resolved and he now wished to provide an opportunity for a secret ballot. But he was talking to a room full of his own supporters: Keating and his followers had taken the opportunity to disappear, buying themselves more time. That meeting lasted for all of two minutes. A third was called for Monday, three days later, and the secret ballot produced a vote of 66 to 44 for Hawke—a slimmer margin, both sides conceded, than there would have been at the

first meeting. Keating resigned as Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, and declared that: 'I had only one shot in the locker and I fired it.' Few believed him.

It was an event which strained relationships in the Party, particularly in the Right, normally the most disciplined of factions. Richardson and Ray had met at Ray's Canberra house on the day of the abortive ballot to discuss the future of the faction. There had been no Right Caucus decision to challenge Hawke: rather, Richardson and the New South Wales Right had decided themselves to support Keating. But both men concluded that splitting the Right, the faction which they argued provided the ballast for the government, would be even more damaging than the leadership struggle itself. They agreed to differ on the leadership but to cooperate on other issues.

Six months later, under siege over a halting government response to Opposition Leader John Hewson's *Fightback!* package, with Keating's replacement as Treasurer, John Kerin, stumbling in the job and the leadership unresolved, Hawke called another Caucus meeting. The Minutes of 19 December 1991 show that his reason for refusing to relinquish the leadership had not changed from the day he justified to Keating his breach of the Kirribilli agreement: 'He said he believed that the 1993 election would be a most important one and his leadership gave the best chance for a Labor victory.' There also was an appeal to the emotions of Caucus: 'He said there were two indisputable facts—the Australian media wanted Paul Keating for Prime Minister and the ALP wanted Bob Hawke. He hoped the will of the ALP would prevail. He tendered his resignation and nominated for the position of leader.' The Centre Left voted even more strongly for Keating, with a vote of about 17 to 3. The Left accepted what was a *fait accompli* and decided on this occasion not to bind members, resulting in at least seven of its members supporting Keating. The split in

the Right continued: while Ray and others acknowledged that Hawke was a damaged leader, they refused to reward the Keating camp for what they regarded as deliberate destabilisation and disloyalty over the preceding six months.

The result of the ballot was 56 to 51 in Keating's favour. Hawke came close but there was no second chance for him—it

was the end of his prime ministership. John Dawkins was among the enthusiastic Keating supporters in Caucus who shed a tear as he shook Hawke's hand and thanked him. Not for the first time, a Caucus meeting had made history.

Mike Steketee

Hawke took the criticisms head-on at a Caucus meeting in February 1988. He attacked 'the notion advanced by some that the Government is not acting in accordance with Labor traditions. He said that this Government had done more than any other to give effect to traditional values and to meet the needs of Labor supporters'. He went on to cite welfare reforms, which he said showed that the needs of the less fortunate were taken into account even in the toughest times; employment, with the creation of one million new jobs in five years; education, with secondary school retention rates rising from 33 per cent to 53 per cent and a 38 000 increase in tertiary education places; child care; the environment; and women's affairs.²⁰

There could be no quibble about the government's political success. Long-term Labor government was a theme to which Hawke returned repeatedly. After calling an election for 1 December 1984, only twenty months after the defeat of the Fraser Government, Hawke emphasised at a Caucus meeting 'the unique opportunity for Labor members to be in government for more than a decade'.²¹ When the government in 1987 became the first Labor administration to win a third term, Hawke acknowledged the historic moment in Caucus and added: 'We are now placed to win a fourth election.'²²

Labor's primary vote went down in each of its first four election wins but this is not surprising for a party in power which inevitably accumulates political baggage, particularly during tough economic times. But it went up in 1993, in the remarkable election held in the wake of the recession and fought by Paul Keating against a GST, the tax he had himself advocated as Treasurer in 1985, only to have the rug pulled from underneath him by a Prime Minister fearful of the political consequences. It was truly the high point for Labor in office or, as Keating described it on election night, 'the sweetest victory of all'.

But, like Hawke, Keating discovered the limits of Caucus support. Despite the authority he derived from the 1993 election, he had to deal with a full-scale Caucus revolt over the Budget only five months later. In many ways a classic post-election Budget, it included a raft of increases in indirect taxes and political irritants such as taking away Medicare coverage for eye tests. For the Caucus, it became the lightning rod for broader resentment over Keating's isolation since the election and his and Treasurer Dawkins' perceived disdain for Caucus. A three-hour litany of criticisms at a meeting of the Caucus economics committee, led by members of Keating's own power base in the New

PAUL KEATING'S CAUCUS

However the Labor heart may beat, its pulse is best discerned in the Caucus of the FPLP. This is where Labor's principles and prejudices are tested, where careers and ambitions are fulfilled or broken, alliances are forged by convenience and conviction. Throughout the years of success and failure, Caucus declares what it is to be Labor. Over the course of my 27 years in the Caucus, I was constantly reminded that it was, if not always wise, then mostly so, and always deep. However imperfectly, it articulates the needs and aspirations of the great body of Australians, and is prepared, when push comes to shove, to fight for them.

As parties are buffeted by events, by accelerating change, by international influences that diminish long-held sovereignties, they need a core. Without this they are knocked about by events, lack confidence and certainty, descend into skittishness and eventual oblivion. Caucus proves that core, that continuity, for Labor; the memory and experience which keep its essence intact. You learn well in the Labor Caucus. Every Caucus colleague adds a little to you.

The Caucus provides the capacity for Labor to remake itself, electorally and intellectually. The Labor years from 1983 to 1996 prove this point. In these years, unlikely as it might have once seemed, Labor gave Australia an open market economy and reinstated its future. Labor, not the Tories, doubled trend productivity, broke the back of inflation and produced the first Budget surpluses in Australia's post-war history. Labor gave this country a competitive stake in the new economy. And while other countries were veering hard to the right, abolishing social programs in their wake, we were strengthening the social wage and building what Tony Blair would christen, a decade after we cut the template, 'The Third Way'.

All the many things that made this

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Prime Minister Paul Keating, the most dominant parliamentarian of his generation.
(Michael Jones, News Limited)

possible were done against the historical and intellectual settings of the Labor Party. But they were well done. Caucus did them because they were part of a new framework to achieve Labor's goals. It saw the sense of it. No one will ever tell me that the Caucus is stodgy or old-fashioned or ideological or, dare I say, recalcitrant. I pay tribute to its larger sense of public duty.

Life in the Caucus was, often as not, a bit like Parliament itself. The enthusiastic, the talented, the hopeful, the disappointed, the onlookers; they are all there. Shadow Ministers droning on over an amendment to the quarantine legislation or Ministers, ever hopeful they could slide their legislation through without abrasions or

amputations, sighing with relief when, the Chair having asked for more speakers or questions, the room fell silent. Members reading the morning papers up the back of the room or inviting future conscripts in a Caucus ballot or for a committee chair or a ministry to a meal that evening.

But there is also the light, the excite-

ment. That dash across the political heaven, going after the things that matter, that get the heart beating faster, that make it all worthwhile. And, of course, the satisfaction of being there—at the centre of the action.

Paul Keating

South Wales Right, prompted a series of modifications to what previously had been considered inviolate budgetary policy.

The 1993 election put the seal on a change in overall strategy which had started when Keating took the leadership from Hawke in December 1991. ‘Those with an eye for history would have perceived that the seventies were a time when the heart ruled,’ the Prime Minister told the first Caucus meeting after the election. ‘In the eighties the head ruled and now in the nineties it was a time for a combination of head and heart.’²³

It signalled a return to a more active role for government, epitomised by the One Nation spending programs in rail and other infrastructure and the Working Nation labour market programs to help the unemployed. Partly by circumstance and partly by calculation, Keating gave Labor supporters something to believe in again—or so it seemed at the time. The government’s response to the High Court Mabo judgement opened the way for Indigenous Australians to claim title to some of the land they had owned originally. Keating’s advocacy of a republic and the steps he took towards a referendum helped unite the Party rank and file, as well as divide the Coalition parties.

All this made the relationship between Caucus and the Executive a more benign one than in earlier years, when Cabinet decisions regularly breached Party policy. The Leader’s reports to Caucus, like his performances in Parliament, became rhetorical tours de force, reviving the spirit of a party consistently trailing in the opinion polls. Following the bloodless coup in the Liberal Party which brought John Howard back to the leadership at the start of 1995, Keating assured the Caucus that Labor had no reason for concern:

He has had a smooth transition, just as Billy McMahon had and it didn’t do him much good in the end . . . Malcolm Fraser pointed out a few weeks ago that Howard was a deadset loser. When he left as Opposition Leader he had an approval rating of 13 per cent. He is a three-trick pony. First of all income splitting for families. Then wages down through his industrial relations policies. And smaller government, which doesn’t reflect his record—outlays 30.5 per cent of GDP when he left government.²⁴

For good measure, Keating also gave Caucus the benefit of his views about Peter Costello, the most politically threatening Opposition figure after Howard:

. . . we had Costello having scones at Claridge’s with [Federal Liberal President Tony] Staley. Costello, the low altitude flyer, a treetop skimmer, a heart like a caraway seed. We can write him off. He is an absolute gold brick phoney. When

we are talking about leadership contenders, let's not forget that the Melbourne establishment would have chosen Costello. That's very revealing about them and here he is the shadow Treasurer.²⁵

Keating consulted less with factional leaders than Hawke, particularly after 1993. In part that was because he did not need to. Labor's win against the odds in 1993 gave him added stature in the Caucus and many of his policies were more in tune with traditional Labor priorities and less controversial than many of those he played a large part in implementing under the Hawke government. But Keating also was less inclined to consultation than Hawke, more intent on reaching decisions and then driving them through the Party processes. His was the crash-through-or-crash style of Gough Whitlam's. It took Labor's landslide defeat in the 1996 election and the rejection of the referendum on the republic under the Howard Government in 1999 to establish that Keating's priorities were not necessarily those of the electorate.

REJECTION TO RECOVERY: 1996 TO MAY 2000

Geoffrey Barker

‘It was so empty. It was the number of empty chairs. It seemed there were hardly any of us in the room.’¹ That was how Labor’s Senate leader, John Faulkner (NSW), registered the significance of Labor’s electoral loss when Caucus reassembled, for the first time, in the Opposition Party room of New Parliament House. On 2 March 1996 Labor had been swept from office on a tidal wave of public rejection after thirteen years in power. Caucus numbers in the 148-member House of Representatives fell from 79 to 49. The 38.75 per cent of the primary vote won by Labor was the lowest since the Scullin government lost office in 1931, and the 6.17 per cent swing against Labor was one of the largest swings at a federal election since 1949.² It was a crushing defeat that reflected the nation’s disillusionment with Paul Keating’s ‘big picture’ politics.

Less than three years later, on 3 October 1998, Labor’s parliamentary numbers recovered almost as spectacularly as they had collapsed. Labor won 18 House of Representatives seats to increase its numbers to 67; the Coalition parties lost 14, reducing their numbers to 80. Under Kim Beazley’s leadership Labor won 51.15 per cent of the national two-party preferred vote and achieved a national swing of 4.78 per cent, which would have been enough to win government if the swing had been uniform.³ Labor was back as a credible opponent, only eight seats shy of a parliamentary majority and within reach of victory at the federal election which is expected in late 2001.

Entering its second century, the membership and role of Caucus bears little similarity to the original 24-member Caucus discussed earlier in this volume.

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*Leader Kim Beazley (right)
and Deputy Leader Simon
Crean have both followed their
fathers' footsteps into Caucus.
(Auspic)*

Changes in the educational, occupational and social character of the Caucus might merely reflect the evolution of Australia, and changes in the role of Caucus reflect the increased complexities and demands of modern political life. While the Caucus has changed profoundly over a century, it remains a key player in determining Labor's political fortunes.

The current Caucus is a much less diverse body. The original Caucus included a majority of immigrants, a fair smattering of itinerant workers, some miners and a solid core of skilled artisans. There were no women. In contrast, only about eight current Caucus members were born outside Australia. There is only one former shearer, Senator Shayne Murphy (Tas.), and relatively few Caucus members have backgrounds in traditional blue-collar skilled trades. There are now 24 women and they comprise one-quarter of the Caucus. About 6 per cent, including Kim Beazley (Brand, WA) and his deputy Simon Crean (Hotham, Vic.), are the children of former Labor politicians. Some two-thirds of today's Caucus members have tertiary qualifications and share backgrounds in professional life or working as political staffers, trade union officials and researchers. Twelve Caucus members are lawyers, a traditional background for legislators. Few claim private-sector business backgrounds. Many had moved from teaching into union or political staff or administrative jobs before entering Parliament, suggesting there is now an informal but fairly clear pathway to Caucus.⁴ Having pursued careers in industrial or political advocacy before entering Parliament, they come to Caucus well armed with intellectual and political skills, but arguably without the range of worldly experience and perhaps less of the crusading zeal of their predecessors in the first Caucus.

They seem, however, more unified than the original 24, who suffered 12 defections over conscription and other issues. Now that federal parliamentary politics has, in McMullin's phrase, 'essentially boiled down to Labor versus the rest',⁵ Caucus members share a strong interest in hanging together for electoral success and career advancement. Protecting their Party endorsements, holding their parliamentary seats, and the prospect of ministerial office are powerful incentives for industrious and conformist behaviour. Like their antecedents, contemporary Caucus members are not revolutionaries but 'possibilists' who

stress the role of the state in improving the lives of working people, especially the disadvantaged. They come to civilise capitalism, not to bury it. That is what links them to their historical roots.

Notwithstanding the overarching policy-making role of Labor's National Conference, and the strategic role of Labor's federal and state organisational machinery, Caucus is the key actor in the continuing formulation and day-to-day projection of Labor Policy. In an age when success in national politics is measured in minutes of television and radio time and centimetres of newspaper column space, the profile and public perceptions of leading Caucus members are crucial. In Opposition, the members are the alternative government. They carry Labor's cause in the national Parliament and to the national electorate. Their leader is the alternative Prime Minister; the frontbench is the alternative Ministry. For these reasons, Caucus—and especially its senior leadership—has become increasingly powerful within the Labor Party in recent decades, notwithstanding the influence of the ALP's national and state organisations, powerful unions, pollsters and advertising agencies. How Caucus performs in the national Parliament and in the media, and how it is perceived in the country through these prisms, are crucial determinants of Labor's electoral success or failure. In the 1950s Labor's difficulties were greatly compounded by charges that 'thirty-six faceless men' in the extra-parliamentary Federal Conference dictated policy to Caucus. From the 1970s, Labor successes coincided with the emergence of Caucus leaders—Whitlam, Hawke and Keating—who sought to dominate national policy—and take credit for successes and blame for failures.

Caucus members act as transmission belts to and from the Party's base. They carry issues and policies to the membership base in their electorates, and take membership views back to the leadership. These days, the frontbench make the running in Caucus. By May 2000, the leadership group comprised Parliamentary Leader Kim Beazley; Deputy Leader Simon Crean; Senate Leader John Faulkner; Deputy Senate Leader Peter Cook; Bob McMullan (Fraser, ACT); Jenny Macklin (Jagajaga, Vic); Michael Lee (Dobell, NSW); Beazley's Chief of Staff, Michael Costello; and ALP National Secretary, Geoff Walsh. Ordinary Caucus members are expected to follow their leaders dutifully, avoid the passionate dissidence that marked the original Caucus and suppress the factional conflict that affected Caucus in the past. It is a system that appears to work electorally. Since 1996 under Kim Beazley's leadership, the Caucus has restored Labor's competitive position and edged the Party close to government. Most importantly, perhaps, Caucus has succeeded—despite hiccoughs—at three key political tasks.

First, it has demonstrated and maintained formidable public discipline. Internal factional conflict was minimised by Beazley's inclusive and consultative leadership style and by the rigidly enforced system of internal proportional representation in the allocation of Opposition posts to the Right, Left and Independent factions. Second, during and after the 1998 election campaign, Caucus restored Labor's tarnished policy credibility on crucial taxation and privatisation policy issues while developing effective attacks on the government's proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST), industrial relations and privatisation policies. Third, Caucus has mounted effective probity attacks, which have forced

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Senate Leader John Faulkner's address to Caucus clearly fails to distract some of his colleagues from more urgent business. (Auspic)

the resignations of six ministers and raised questions about the activities of other ministers and senior government MPs.

Caucus has at the same time substantially renewed itself by bringing in a new generation of rising politicians, a significant number of them former senior Labor and trade union staffers who, as noted above, arrived in Canberra with political skills and ambitions significantly more developed than those of most new MPs. Kim Beazley has described the pre-1996 and post-1998 Caucuses as 'like chalk and cheese', a judgement that seems justified by the extent of the turnover in Caucus membership.⁶ These changes have brought with them, and possibly accelerated, changes in the Caucus factions. There are now 46 members of the Right, while the Left has 35 and the Independents 15. The influence of the once-dominant New South Wales Right in the Caucus has declined with the retirement of its warlord, Senator Graham Richardson, and the arrival of new and talented Right MPs from Queensland and South Australia. The Left faction is broadly divided into two sub-groups, usually identified as the hard left and soft left. The majority soft left sub-group has close associations with the Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LH & MWU) and former ACTU President Martin Ferguson (Batman, Vic.); the minority hard left group tends to be associated with the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) and Caucus figures such as Senator George Campbell (NSW). The Independents (formerly the Centre Left and non-factionalised Caucus members) are a crucial balance group within the Caucus.

SHOP FLOOR TO LEATHER BENCHES

The relationship between the industrial and parliamentary wings of the labour movement has been crucial to its fortunes for the past 100 years. It was the determination of trade unions to wrest political power from employers that brought the Australian Labor Party into existence. Since then, their voting power at Party conferences, their financial contribution and their direct involvement in all aspects of Labor politics have sustained the Party.

Trade union activists made up a majority of the Caucus in its early years, and those who came to the Federal Parliament wearing a union badge usually maintained the connection. Powerful unions, such as the Australian Workers' Union, controlled blocs of parliamentarians who could advance their particular interests. Some Caucus members even doubled as union officials—hence Billy Hughes remained Secretary of the Sydney Wharf Labourer's Union, and President of the Trolley, Draymen and Carters' Union and the Waterside Workers' Federation until 1916.

But it was difficult to do both jobs. Union members chafed at the slow progress of Labor governments in improving pay and conditions, while strikes were a political liability for a Party that sought to attract uncommitted voters.

The formation in 1927 of the Australian Council of Trade Unions put the relationship on a formal basis, although the ACTU's dissatisfaction with the economy measures adopted by the Scullin Labor government during the Depression spilled over into criticism of the Caucus. Similar strains emerged after World War II, when relations deteriorated as Chifley tried to hold down wages, strains which culminated in the coal strike of 1949. Whitlam's falling out with ACTU president Bob Hawke in the 1970s was another example of a familiar pattern. Unions expected little of non-Labor governments and were seldom disap-

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Two of Federal Labor's most colourful parliamentarians, Fred Daly and Mick Young, had strong trade union backgrounds. Daly was a member of the Clerks Union Management Committee in New South Wales while Young was an AWU organiser in South Australia. (Australian Information Service, private collection, Bob Hawke)

pointed. They made special allowances for Labor governments but also expected much of them, and when disappointed were all the more aggrieved.

In 1983, when Hawke became Prime Minister, there was an attempt to avert damaging internecine conflict by means of the Accord, whereby the Labor Government and the ACTU bound themselves to a co-operative compact. The Accord lasted for a decade, but was unable to stem the decline of union coverage resulting from changes in the workforce the Accord facilitated. As trade unions faltered, so the presence and influence of the union movement in Caucus also declined.

Up to 1951 the leaders of the FPLP—Watson, Fisher, Tudor, Charlton, Scullin, Curtin and Chifley—had all been elected to union office from the shop floor and then made their way into parliamentary politics. Since then, with the exception of Arthur Calwell, there has been no such apprenticeship.

The unions themselves have turned to professional recruitment of their leaders and many of these latter-day officials have

moved on to parliamentary careers. Bob Hawke's progression from the presidency of the ACTU to the FPLP was followed by Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson. There are far fewer members of the Caucus with shopfloor experience, and the special regard for Mick Young was increased by appreciation of a worker who had come up from the ranks.

Stuart Macintyre

sections of the Labor Party—notably some big left unions—were highly critical of the economic policy direction taken by Caucus after 1996. This was despite strong Caucus opposition in Parliament and in the 1998 election campaign to the government's proposal to introduce a GST and to fully privatise Telstra, both issues on which Labor's record in office had undermined the Party's credibility by the time Labor lost office. With opinion polls indicating that the electorate believed the Coalition was the superior economic manager, Caucus moved to shift policy marginally away from the fairly rigorous free-market policies of the Hawke–Keating era, but without abandoning a broad commitment to deregulation, competition and free trade. It sought to place greater weight on cautiously pragmatic policy to manage the pace of change and to ameliorate difficulties being experienced by Australians—especially in rural areas—as the country adjusted to the increasingly globalised economy, but without exposing Labor to attack as a highly interventionist tax-and-spend party.

This complex balancing act attracted some criticism from within the Party, much of it led by the National Secretary of the AMWU, Doug Cameron, who criticised 'middle-class self-styled experts' trying to marginalise the unions' power in the Labor Party.⁷ A former Labor staffer, Dr Andrew Scott, similarly argued that the Australian Labor and British Labour parties have discarded 'their essential basic clothing' in moving to 'dump old-fashioned ideological baggage and travel light'. Summing up the argument in his book *Running on Empty: Modernising the British and Australian Labor Parties*, Dr Scott wrote:

The ALP under Beazley in its first phase of opposition in 1996–98 emphasised full employment as the highest goal of economic policy, supported greater public investment in health and education, and returned to a strong commitment to centralised wage fixing. This approach was expressed in the new ALP Platform adopted in 1998. It aided the party's recovery of some support at the October 1998 Federal election.

However, since their success in October 1998, Beazley and the ALP nationally have fallen back on rhetoric which repudiates many very good aspects of Labor policy tradition as mere 'sentimentality'. The leadership now extols yet more 'modernisation'. Rather than adopt more interventionist and redistributive economic policies to consolidate and further extend the ALP's support, too many influential people in the ALP now seem to prefer punitive and regressive social policies.⁸

Cameron and Scott appeared to be reviving a familiar Left complaint that Labor was deserting its traditional working-class roots and pitching instead to some vaguely identified upwardly mobile middle-class aspirants whose loyalties were at best fickle.

Caucus itself has voiced little of this Left criticism. Indeed, Caucus appears to have acquiesced happily in Beazley's accession to the leadership (he was elected unopposed) and in his subsequent handling of the job. Yet Beazley was moved to respond to Scott that 'the modern approach of the Federal Opposition I lead is not at odds with traditional Labor values. In fact, our approach draws on those values and reinforces them at every opportunity'. Rejecting Scott's claim that Caucus was taking traditional Labor voters for granted, Beazley wrote: 'The ALP I lead is about today's Australia. It's about families, it's about fairness and the future.'⁹ With this rhetorical flourish, Beazley appeared to be attempting to define Labor's contemporary constituency as something far broader than 'traditional Labor voters'.

Since 1996 Caucus has tried to strike a balance between local concerns and global imperatives, between unions (jobs) and business (profits). It has tried to pitch to its traditional blue-collar base and to demonstrate its concern for the victims of structural adjustment to economic globalisation at the same time as it has sought to allay business suspicions. Caucus has effectively acknowledged that the Hawke-Keating years saw Labor become increasingly remote from traditional constituencies and equity concerns. By opposing the government's GST and its confrontational industrial relations program, Caucus moved to reclaim its traditional blue-collar base. It was helped immeasurably by the government's support for a stevedoring firm that deployed black-clad security guards wearing balaclavas and leading savage dogs against demonstrating dock workers. By opposing the full sale of Telstra and adopting a flexible approach to what remains of protectionism, Caucus sought to broaden Labor's appeal in rural and regional Australia where the impact of economic globalisation was particularly acute as private and government services and jobs continued to decline.

Caucus' ultimate and uneasy acquiescence to the government's business tax package was a politically shrewd manoeuvre to reassure business, to keep capital gains tax off the agenda in the next federal election campaign, and to appear 'global'. But it was not hard to find Caucus members on the Left who muttered that the business tax package was no more equitable than the GST. There was also unease within Caucus on Labor's policy switches to support youth wage rates and to accept 'work for the dole' requirements on the unemployed. In the wider business and media circles there was concern that Labor's opposition to the full sale of Telstra would prevent Telstra from prospering in what was being termed the 'new' global economy.

The sensitivity of both Beazley and Shadow Treasurer Simon Crean to Left charges that Labor had qualified its 'traditional' commitments was evident in personal interviews in February 2000. 'The Liberals have confronted us at the deepest levels of our belief', Beazley said. 'There are three things on which no compromise is possible: the GST, industrial relations and the Telstra sale. On all other issues sometimes we might find common ground.'¹⁰ Crean said: 'All countries have to balance economy and society . . . Growth alone is not

THE GHOST OF 'WHITE AUSTRALIA'

In 1996, Pauline Hanson (later the Leader of the One Nation Party) raised the spectre of the White Australia Policy in her first speech to Parliament when she said, 'I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.' She also declared:

Arthur Calwell was a great Australian and Labor leader . . . [who] said: 'Japan, India, Burma, Ceylon and every new African nation are fiercely anti-white and anti one another. Do we want or need any of these people here? I am one red-blooded Australian who says no and who speaks for 90 per cent of Australians.' I have no hesitation in echoing the words of Arthur Calwell.

Hanson's invocation of Calwell used his words, written 25 years earlier, to justify her views. Yet as Australia's first Minister for Immigration, Calwell oversaw bipartisan policies, however racially discriminatory, that would over time establish a more diverse and tolerant Australia.

Hanson's speech, which also canvassed 'privileges' for Aborigines, was a lightning rod for racists. It gave a measure of 'legitimacy' to bigotry and vilification and provided a thin veneer of respectability to intolerance. It encouraged the supporters of race hatred to 'go public', to imagine that they were mainstream. Many Australians of Asian origin reported being harassed on the street. The Prime Minister, John Howard, responded by defending Hanson's right to 'free speech'.

Caucus debated at length the ramifications of Hanson. Members acknowledged that a principled stand against Hanson could result in negative electoral consequences for Labor. However, Caucus stood firm. Kim Beazley, to the applause of Caucus, stated 'there comes a time . . . when one has to stand on principle even if one gets shot to pieces'.

In Parliament Labor insisted on, and achieved, a bipartisan motion on race. But,

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Arthur Calwell's strident views on non-European migration were well known. It was less well known that Calwell spoke Mandarin, was a popular figure in the Chinese community in Melbourne and had a penchant for Chinese food. (News Limited)

most importantly, Beazley and ALP National Secretary Gary Gray announced in May 1997 that Labor would preference One Nation last on any ballot ticket. This reinforced Labor as the predominant political force against racist policies in Australia. The Labor Party had moved a long way from its 1905 commitment to the 'maintenance of racial purity'.

Labor challenged John Howard and the Coalition parties to match its preference commitment, but they remained unmoved for more than a year. Only the Liberals' humiliation in Queensland's 1998 election, which saw the election to Parliament of eleven One Nation members, forced John Howard to back down. In repudiating Hanson, Kim Beazley's Caucus had exorcised its own ghost of White Australia.

John Faulkner

sufficient. It is vital to accept a fair distribution of economic benefits.’¹¹ But what would constitute a fair distribution remains unclear.

The emotionally charged issues of native title and the Stolen Generations, the rise of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation movement, and the question of the republic were all tackled firmly by Beazley’s Caucus to demonstrate a united approach that contrasted sharply with divided and often highly qualified government attitudes. Beazley’s declaration that Labor would place One Nation candidates last on its how-to-vote tickets contrasted strongly with John Howard’s insistence that for the Coalition the issue had to be decided by state branches. One Nation initially worried the Caucus leadership, which feared Hanson could draw votes away from traditional Labor constituencies. ‘We could see she was trying to eat our lunch,’ Beazley said. ‘We could see her as a threat. So even if we were not inclined to take a principled position, common sense told us that we would be defeated if we compromised with an enemy who could take a tougher position than us.’¹²

In late 1999 and early 2000 Caucus delivered blows to the government on education and health policy. It forced the government to abandon a proposal to change the structure of higher education funding after receiving a leaked Cabinet document. Caucus frontbencher Jenny Macklin harried the government over scandals involving radiologists using inside knowledge to profit from the purchase of magnetic resonance imaging machines. The government was arraigned for its neglect of aged care in nursing homes. After the earlier challenges to the probity of Coalition ministers, the Prime Minister was forced to abandon his own published rules for ministerial probity when issues of perceived conflict of interest swirled around the Defence Minister, John Moore, the then Resources Minister, Warwick Parer, and Parliamentary Secretary, Warren Entsch. Even then, Howard found himself under fire when the government helped to bail out a textile firm run by his brother, Stan.

Much of the credit for Labor’s political recovery after 1996 was attributable to the stability and leadership provided by Kim Beazley, who was elected unopposed to replace Paul Keating at the first post-election Caucus meeting on 19 March 1996. Beazley’s leadership was unchallenged and supported throughout by all Caucus factions. The Caucus ballot for the deputy leadership was close: Gareth Evans (Holt, Vic.) defeated Simon Crean by 42 votes to 37 in an open vote free from factional influence. The remaining uncertainties about Beazley centred on whether he had what some Caucus members called ‘the relevant respect’—the hardness, the ability to instil fear—that seems a necessary characteristic in Australian politics. To be intelligent, respected, decent and popular have rarely been adequate qualifications for political success in Australia. But the prevailing view of Caucus seemed to be that whatever Labor lost from Beazley’s lack of what some Caucus members called ‘a bit of mongrel’ was more than offset by what it gained from the broad acceptance and goodwill he enjoyed across the nation.

Beazley’s performance was particularly important in Labor’s first term in Opposition because Gareth Evans, Labor’s former Foreign Affairs Minister, had difficulty coping in Parliament with the aggressively Keatingesque performances of the Treasurer, Peter Costello. Despite this failure, Evans won wide admiration

'I'M HERE'

Superficially, Kevin Rudd and Anthony Albanese would seem political opposites in Caucus. Rudd is a smooth former diplomat from the Queensland Right; Albanese is an aggressive former factional warrior from the New South Wales Left. Both were attracted to the Labor Party because of personal hardship. Rudd speaks of the indignity of having to sleep in a car for some nights after his father, a Nambour share farmer, was killed in a car accident when he was 11. Albanese recalls living alone for six months at the age of 14 when his mother, an invalid pensioner, was hospitalised.

As Rudd says: 'When you come to the critical cathartic point in everyone's Damascus Road to ending up in the Labor Party, there's usually something very direct, very confronting and very working-class which has hit you between the eyes at some time.'

Both Rudd and Albanese describe themselves as beneficiaries of the Whitlam Government's free tertiary education policy. Education led Rudd to diplomacy and eventually to the post of Director-General of the Cabinet office in the Queensland Government of Wayne Goss. It led Albanese into a seven-year stint as Assistant Secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Party, and to jobs working for former Labor Minister Tom Uren and the New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr.

Albanese joined Caucus in 1996—one of the few new members elected in that dismal year; Rudd was one of the large class of '98 who have brought Labor back to the fringe of political power. Their experiences and assessments, offered separately, are strikingly similar.

On entering Caucus

Albanese: You had an absolute sense of history that is quite a humbling experience. You were feeling 'I'm here. I'm here at the

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Deputy Leader Simon Crean with two of the 'young Turks' of Caucus, Kevin Rudd (left) and Anthony Albanese (right). (Auspic)

Caucus meeting. I'm not here as an adviser. I'm not here as a factional functionary. I'm here in my own right.' It hit you in a way which was surprising and a bit daunting.

Rudd: I walked over and looked at the photographs of previous Caucuses and previous parliamentary leaders . . . and thinking, 'Here you are, participating in what feels enormously personally reinforcing, this great movement with a rich continuing tradition.' There's a great sense of honour to be part of the show—but at the same time [there is] the reality check when you look at the pictures of those who made it and those who didn't, and you think 'This is a very unpredictable business.'

On their perceptions of Caucus

Albanese: There was less conflict than I thought there would be. Quite often there's blame about why the defeat and struggle over the spoils of defeat. None of that was there. You were made to feel welcome early on. People will trust you at face value and do the right thing here, regardless of what differences you have had with them in the past. I now have a very good relationship with Leo McLeay [the veteran New South

Wales Right warrior] which, given our history, is quite remarkable.

Rudd: The factional story is grossly over-written against the current reality. It is infinitely less factional than I had been led to believe. As a result of cross-factional friendships that develop, the cross-factional discussion and dialogue is a whole lot deeper than I thought it would be . . . In fact the Caucus, with some rare exceptions, seems to have become less the place for formal debate on questions of central Party policy than other forums. Therefore, if you want to contribute publicly to those debates, then your avenue for doing so is the Parliament itself.

How they see Caucus working in May 2000

Albanese: Caucus works extraordinarily well as a whole. There's an extraordinary amount of unity across ideological issues . . . It has become more sub-factionalised than it was prior to 1996. There's more a perception that people are fighting over real spoils of power as we come close to government. Some of the tensions become greater, and that's probably a natural thing that occurs. It's much more serious now.

There's a much greater sense of urgency now. There are many more women, which has substantially changed the atmosphere. It's still a macho culture, but the networks are broader. If you want to have contact with the whole Caucus, you cannot ignore that and the issues championed by women.

Rudd: One reality is the Tuesday meeting, which is like the High Church of Caucus. Then there's the ongoing Caucus beast, which is a cocktail of going out together of a Wednesday night, having a bite in the dining room here, knocking about a bit on Caucus committees, and conversations in the Chamber when what's going on bores you silly. There's about 100 of us . . . By and large we are the vehicles who take the message out through our rank and file to our communities . . . People are infinitely more likely to believe something that they hear by word of mouth from people they trust and know rather than what they see on TV or read in the paper. That means we have a continuing responsibility to get the word out to our local communities through our local interest groups and opinion leaders.

Geoffrey Barker

for overseeing the demanding task of a post-election Platform rewrite. He retired from Parliament in late 1999 judged one of Labor's best Foreign Affairs ministers, and policy-framers, but a failure as Opposition Shadow Treasurer. He was, however, a key player in one of Labor's major coups: the defection of Democrat Leader Senator Cheryl Kernot to Labor in October 1997. This event gave Labor its first big bounce in the post-election polls and boosted morale throughout the Party.

But Evans, with his high profile, was hardly Beazley's most difficult personnel problem. Tasmanian Senator Nick Sherry, elected unopposed as Deputy Senate Leader, slashed his wrists in a suicide attempt after being attacked in Parliament by Treasurer Peter Costello. Former Western Australian Premier Carmen Lawrence (Fremantle, WA), regarded as one of the most talented people in federal politics, was embroiled in protracted legal proceedings. Shadow Education Minister, Mark Latham (Werriwa, NSW), widely touted as a future Labor leader, quit the frontbench in a fit of pique over education policy and took to attacking Labor policy in newspaper columns. Cheryl Kernot also proved troublesome. On election night, 1998, fearing that she would not win

the outer Brisbane electorate of Dickson, Kernot spat the dummy on national television and complained that she should have been given a safer seat. Later she took protracted sick leave, returning to Parliament in early 2000 a chastened, somewhat diminished and heavily protected figure.

Earlier, in August 1996, Caucus leaders were seriously embarrassed when militant trade unionists damaged doors and property at the front of Parliament House in an anti-government demonstration that became a near riot. Beazley moved quickly to distance Labor from the demonstration and to criticise the unionists involved. The Lindsay by-election in outer Sydney in October 1996 was also a setback. The Liberal's Jackie Kelly won the by-election with a swing of more than 6 per cent after her election victory had been challenged by the former Labor incumbent and Keating government minister, Ross Free, against the advice of Caucus leaders. Kelly's victory boosted Liberal morale just as Labor was increasing pressure on government ministers over probity issues, and almost a year passed before there were further ministerial resignations.

But the most damaging event for Caucus was the defection of veteran Queensland Senator Mal Colston in August 1996. Colston's Budget Day defection took away Caucus' capacity to join with the Greens and Democrats to prevent the partial sale of Telstra. As events unfolded, and Senator Colston faced 28 charges of defrauding the government, Caucus took comfort in the fact that it had at least shed a member whose personal probity was under a cloud. Caucus' remorseless personal and political destruction of Colston, spear-headed by Victorian Senator Robert Ray, was a grim demonstration of Labor's propensity for revenge. 'Anyone who rats on the Labor Party will get exactly what this quisling Quasimodo from Queensland got,' Ray said during a memorable Senate speech.¹³

For all its difficulties after the 1996 defeat, there were some powerful forces preventing the diminished Caucus from descending into chaotic and damaging infighting. One was the sheer loneliness of being so heavily depleted. Bob McMullan, Manager of Opposition Business, observed: 'If we had not hung together we would have hung separately . . . there was a lot of pessimism but the magnitude of defeat saved us.'¹⁴ In fact few Caucus members publicly voiced the gloom they felt after the 1996 election, although Gareth Evans famously complained that he was suffering from 'relevancy deprivation syndrome'. Caucus leaders appeared to draw initial strength from the speed and ease with which they were able to start mounting damaging attacks on the probity of government ministers and other government MPs.

At the same time, despite John Howard's pledges to govern 'for all of us' and to make Australia more 'relaxed and comfortable', it soon became clear to Caucus members that the government was moving to implement divisive economic and social policies. Government moves to introduce the GST, to complete the privatisation of Telstra, to support Patrick Stevedores in the waterfront dispute, to implement major welfare cuts, and to resist any apology to the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Australians, all convinced Caucus members that they were facing a political crisis. Bob McMullan observed that: 'You felt you were a bulwark against regression in Australia's social circumstances. People felt proud of our stands. We had moral ascendancy. These were big issues worth standing for.'¹⁵

Taking a broad view of the period from 1996 to early 2000, it is possible to sum up the main challenges that faced Caucus and to judge its general performance. First, Caucus had to ensure after the 1996 defeat that Labor was not reduced to a permanent rump in the Federal Parliament. The 1998 election result showed that Caucus had made strong gains, winning back seats, and renewing itself with a strong injection of new and young talent. The leakage of votes to third parties, however, suggested Labor still had significant ground to make up. Second, Caucus had to start discrediting and wearing down the Coalition Government. Its successful and early attacks on the probity of ministers removed much of the gloss from the new government as quickly as any Opposition could have reasonably hoped for in a time of broad economic prosperity. Third, Caucus had to differentiate itself from the policies of both the Hawke–Keating era and from the Howard government. Here the record is ambiguous. On the big four economic issues on the national political agenda—the GST, Telstra privatisation, industrial relations and trade policy—Caucus under Beazley appeared to be carving out pragmatic policies that reflected a shift away from the rigour of Hawke–Keating and the ideological fixations of the Coalition.

On the great conscience issue at the turn of the century—the issue of an apology to, and reconciliation with, Indigenous Australia—Labor clearly remained the party of moral conscience and generosity. The Coalition’s attitude was at best grudging, and was underscored by John Howard’s March 2000 decision to abandon the December 2000 reconciliation deadline, as well as his refusal to step in to challenge mandatory sentencing laws affecting Aboriginal youngsters in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. With the Coalition government now holding office with a paper-thin majority, the acid test for Beazley will come with the next federal election.

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PART II

PERSPECTIVES

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PARTNER OR RIVAL? CAUCUS AND CABINET

Patrick Weller and Bronwyn Stevens

When the Caucus first met in 1901, its members had little doubt that, if and when the Party won office, the Caucus would be the dominant body and would direct Cabinet. Apart from a few days in office in Queensland, enough only to flip through the files, only the South Australian E. L. Batchelor among the new Labor members had any ministerial experience. But the members believed they were delegates of the broader movement and were therefore bound to implement the policy determined by Conference. Most of the new members had been involved in the problems of the 1890s, when some of the Labor men elected to colonial parliaments had defected to other parties rather than subordinate themselves to external instruction.

The concept of Caucus control was novel, to be found nowhere else in the systems of government that had developed out of Westminster. Conservative parties never accepted that a ministry would be answerable to a caucus. When the British Labour Party grew to be a force, some twenty years later, it preferred to copy its parliamentary rivals rather than follow the colonial precedents of Caucus sovereignty.

How well did this innovation work? In truth, not so well; it was to be a constant source of strain. The history of Labor governments is a story of frequent tension between Caucus and Cabinet, a story in which the rules stayed the same in theory, but the practice varied. By the end of the century the Cabinet was far freer from Caucus control than the Party's principles initially anticipated. Of course, it is a matter of degree. The Caucus is probably still as

powerful as any party meeting that can be found in a parliamentary system, but it does not play the role that was envisaged in 1901.

There were three ways in which Caucus control could be exerted after the FPLP won office: first, in the election of ministers; second, in the degree of responsibility of Cabinet to Caucus; and third, the participation of members of Caucus in government decision-making. The first was soon settled; the second and third were to be frequent sources of friction.

On 23 April 1904, Chris Watson accepted a commission to form a government. Caucus agreed that he 'have a free hand in the formation of his Ministry'.¹ He discussed the possibilities with two colleagues and, when Hughes chose not to be the Attorney-General, invited the protectionist H. B. Higgins into the Cabinet. It was the last time the Leader was given this freedom. In October, after the government fell, a member gave notice of motion: 'That in the opinion of this Party in order to promote peace & general satisfaction within it is desirable in the formation of any future Cabinet, that the members of such be chosen by an exhaustive vote of the members of this Party.'²

The motion was never discussed but a similar motion was moved at the 1905 Federal Conference and passed. Watson was sufficiently concerned that the decision was a reflection on his leadership that he offered his resignation to Caucus. He was persuaded to withdraw it but his mind was not changed. When Fisher was asked to form a government in 1908, Watson tried to give him the freedom to select his colleagues. His motion was amended to put into effect the 1905 Conference resolution; the amendment was passed by 24 votes to 17.³ That dispute was over and the right of Caucus to elect ministers was not disputed again.

The other issues were harder. Watson initially argued that nothing was new when Labor was in office: 'There is no truth in the suggestion by Mr Reid that the Ministry has to submit matters to Caucus, though on several occasions, as a matter of courtesy, after something has been decided upon, it has reported to Caucus.'⁴

He may have been correct, but neither his government nor the first Fisher Government, both in a minority, had prospects of long survival. In the first majority government, elected in 1910, there was a high degree of co-operation between Cabinet and Caucus. Four committees were set up to consider legislation before it went to Parliament. Some Bills received extensive review in both committee and Caucus; a few clauses were added on the initiative of members of Caucus. On occasion Caucus forced Cabinet to back down, even to the extent of Hughes agreeing to adjourn debate in the House to bring a Bill back to Caucus for further discussion. Most of the major clashes happened in 1910 as ministers found their feet.

In September there was a long discussion of the relationship between Cabinet and Caucus after the Works Estimates had been pushed through the House in an all-night sitting. Higgs moved in Caucus: 'That this party sincerely hopes that the method adopted to push the Works Estimates through in one sitting should not occur again.' Caucus adjourned the discussion, first to the evening, and then met the next day for two sessions of debate before Higgs withdrew the motion.⁵ It had been an extensive debate, but seemed to serve

the purpose. For most of the rest of the Parliament, relations were quite good. In part this may have been because Fisher accepted that Caucus had the right to discuss tactics and determine strategy, in part because, as Childe suggests, Cabinet reflected the sentiments of the Labor movement and tried to implement the Platform.⁶

There were still some limits. In 1912, a member demanded that Caucus should consider all significant appointments; the debate spread over three days before Fisher ruled that, as the motion was 'not a party question no vote could be taken'.⁷ A motion to disagree with his ruling was eventually lost. Some discretion for Cabinet was maintained.

The good relations did not long survive the return to office in 1914. There was no committee structure to consider legislation. Much of government in war was undertaken by regulation, with no Caucus participation. Backbenchers were soon critical of the government's failure to introduce Labor's social policy or to ensure that all sections of the society shared equally in the burdens caused by war. Caucus might have had the nominal right to discuss legislation, but some Bills, notably the wide-reaching *War Precautions Act*, were tabled in the House before Caucus saw them. In June 1915, the Executive, concerned about internal cohesion and in the face of public criticism, asked Caucus to 'consider the behaviour of certain members'. After a debate lasting three days, the critics turned the tables and Caucus resolved:

That in future all Government measures be submitted for the consideration of Caucus before their presentation to Parliament, and that the nature of those measures when so presented to Parliament shall be as a duly constituted caucus meeting by majority may decide.⁸

Here was a restatement of the basic doctrine of Caucus supremacy. Caucus debate then ranged widely over government administration in a meeting that was held, on and off, for five days. Fisher's resignation a couple of months later might well have been in part due to the strain of dealing with a rebellious Caucus.

Cabinet still usually got its way. Its members were expected to vote solidly in Caucus and did so; that vote provided a base for a Caucus majority over its critics. It was not always welcomed. At the 1916 Special Conference, Scullin, who had been a member of Caucus, moved that:

Every Labor Minister or officer, or member of any committee of the party, shall exercise his own judgement and vote in Caucus meetings, notwithstanding that a Cabinet or any committee shall have arrived at a majority decision. No action of any kind whatsoever will be taken to interfere with the freedom of a minority of Cabinet or any committee in the Caucus meetings of the party.⁹

As Prime Minister, Hughes was more confrontationist than Fisher had been. A week after becoming Leader he agreed with the state Premiers to postpone referenda for increased federal power, even though they were part of the Labor Platform. He then called a Caucus meeting (the second that day) at 10.35 pm, presented it with a *fait accompli*, persuaded it to accept the proposal and announced it immediately in Parliament.¹⁰ But that style could not be maintained.

After November 1915 Caucus only met three times, in the one week in May 1916, before the momentous conscription conflict overtook the Party. By this stage it was not a question of relations between Cabinet and Caucus, for both were irrevocably split. On 14 November a vote of no confidence was moved against Hughes, but he walked out before the vote, inviting 'those who thought with him to follow'.¹¹ The causes of the split went far beyond relations with Cabinet, but the lack of any sympathy for many of the ministers could only have made it worse.

Scullin might have decried the solidarity of Cabinet when he was on the backbench, but when he became Prime Minister in 1929 he must have wished that he could insist on it. His Cabinet's relations with his Caucus were torrid, as that first great volume of Australian contemporary history, Warren Denning's *Caucus Crisis*, so eloquently shows. The government was in a bind as the Depression bit. It did not control the Senate, which regularly emasculated its legislation. What was acceptable to the Senate was not acceptable to the more radical members of Caucus, who wanted unemployment reduced at any cost. Cabinet did little to involve the backbenchers in discussion of policy. Committees were ad hoc and indecisive. Scullin sometimes took the Caucus into his confidence and explained his tactics. When Cabinet could not reach a decision on preferences to unionists on the waterfront, Scullin took the issue to Caucus 'for full consideration and a decision'.¹² But Caucus was so divided that he received no reply. Criticism had been common, solutions few.

When Scullin decided to go overseas, the government was left in the hands of James Fenton and Joe Lyons, while the temporarily disgraced Theodore agitated from the backbench. The temporary leaders had no answers and no control. The Caucus 'revolt' exploded in late 1930. Caucus adopted a financial plan, probably designed by Theodore, as an amendment to the government's financial proposals. It demanded that the government compulsorily extend the term of a government loan about to fall due, forcing Fenton and Lyons to retire to 'consider their position'.¹³ Lyons actually ignored the Caucus instruction, stuck to his economic policy and managed to persuade Caucus to delay further action until Scullin returned. Caucus insisted Cabinet introduce several measures that it had earlier rejected. The Party room pushed for the filling of two High Court vacancies, even though Scullin sent telegrams threatening to resign if the appointments were made. Caucus was determined to exert its right to insist that a measure be introduced but thereafter could not force the Ministry to act. Some Cabinet cooperation was required if Caucus was to 'rule'.

Throughout 1931 the crises continued. Fenton, Lyons and three other members crossed the floor in February in protest against the reinstatement of Theodore. The Lang faction walked out in March over their support for the Lang Plan. The Prime Minister had ruled that no federal member could support it after Eddie Ward had been elected as an advocate of the Plan.¹⁴ In June, Scullin was able to gain the support of Caucus for the Premiers' Plan, by 26 votes to 13, but at a cost. Two ministers resigned rather than support it.¹⁵ The power of Caucus became a vital issue, because the government seemed incapable of solving the national problems; the solutions it did propose were often unacceptable to the more radical and frustrated backbenchers. The result was

a rift between the ministers who were overcome by political circumstance and opposition, and impotent backbenchers with ideas, however impractical, and no capacity to implement them. The real limitations of the Caucus were clear: it could criticise and propose and yet never deliver by itself. The lessons from the disastrous Scullin Government were available the next time the Party was in office. Those who had watched from the backbench or served in Cabinet as junior ministers had to do better.

Labor returned to office in 1941. Within two months war with Japan had begun. In Parliament, the government depended on the support of two independents for survival. It was a difficult period for government. Australia's survival was at stake. In the next eight years Caucus was never subservient, but neither did relations break down as they had under the Scullin Government. Curtin and Chifley were careful to manage the Caucus, not to alienate it. That was never easy.

In public Chifley was keen to re-state the traditional view:

I am proud to be the mouthpiece of the caucus of the Labour Government of this country. I have no objection to offer if my colleagues differ from me regarding some aspects of Government policy; we have a way of finally resolving our difficulties. The proposals I submit to the House have been submitted with complete sincerity and confidence in the united opinion of the party.¹⁶

Both Chifley and Curtin put time into ensuring that the relationship worked. There was an attempt in 1940 to elect a chairman who was separate from the Leader but it failed.¹⁷ Both Prime Ministers were keen to retain that role as it helped to run the meetings. On most occasions, government business was taken first, before the general business when members could ask ministers questions about their administration.

On several occasions, Caucus got its way as it pushed ministers to act or sought amendments to its proposals. In October 1941, just after taking office, it required the Treasurer to withdraw the Budget and insert a higher pension rate (although Chifley managed to get the motion rescinded).¹⁸ It overruled the Cabinet on some electoral matters and pressed again for pension rises. But often it found it hard to give the extensive post-war legislative program adequate attention. One member complained: 'all he asked was that Ministers give an opportunity to members, who are interested in bills to be brought down by the Ministers for presentation to Parliament, to examine proposals in the bills and so enable them to suggest any amendments.'¹⁹

This attitude was very different from the Scullin days. There were moments of tension. In March 1943 Calwell attacked Curtin, claiming that Curtin would soon 'finish up on the other side, leading a National Government'.²⁰ Curtin left the meeting and wrote a dignified response, offering his resignation. Calwell immediately apologised and Caucus adopted a unanimous vote of confidence in the Prime Minister.

Much of the trouble in Caucus was caused by ministers. There was no requirement that ministers vote solidly for Cabinet decisions, although some ministers believed they should. Eddie Ward in particular was prepared to use Caucus to continue Cabinet battles. He attacked Curtin over conscription in

A LONG TAIL?



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Ben Chifley's Ministry 1 November 1946 to 19 November 1949. Standing: John Dedman, Claude Barnard, Bill Riordan, Nelson Lemmon, Ben Courtice, Cyril Chambers (obscured), Reg Pollard, Don Cameron, Nick McKenna, Bill Ashley, Eddie Ward. Seated: Arthur Drakeford, 'Doc' Evatt, Ben Chifley, Ted Holloway (obscured), Bill Scully, Vic Johnson, John Armstrong. Arthur Calwell is absent. (National Library of Australia)

Chifley knew the good men in his Cabinet and consistently helped them. The first Curtin Cabinet had a tail like an Australian Test eleven in a bad year. Chifley's team was an improvement, but the old hands who had boiled the billy with Chif in the old days were still there. Most of them were useless. If they faced a crisis they ran to Chif. The old sage, pipe and all, was ready with his advice. He knew of the situation days before, and was waiting for the knock on the door . . .

When I said in the House that the Labor Cabinets had a tail like Halley's Comet I wasn't being facetious. All these junior Ministers were good men but they hadn't a clue as administrators. Mostly their exalted post was a reward for long service. Backbenchers could pick the weak minister in the twinkling of an eye. They could always sense the situation when the top bureaucrat was running his Minister.

How often have I stood at a Minister's table having practically won my point on the subject I was advocating only to hear the voice of the top bureaucrat, 'I don't think I'd advise that Sir. I think we ought to have another look at it'. The Minister would look bleakly at his parliamentary colleague, and then at his chief adviser, shuffle the papers on his table and say like a parrot learning to talk, 'Yes I think we should have another look at it'. (In Parliamentary parlance 'having another look at it' means 'Lose this file and if Blank comes back again tell him I'm writing to him. Tell him I'm out'.) It was in these years that the power of the bureaucrat grew. Today it's a toss up whether the bureaucracy is in charge of the executive. Parliament itself, that is its rank and file membership, is only the Greek chorus.

Extract from Leslie Haylen,
Twenty Years' Hard Labor, 1969

1942, and moved for the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1944 after criticising Cabinet's inaction in solving a miner's strike. He even demanded he be given a particular file by another minister as part of a battle with the Fairfax empire (to no avail).²¹ When the government was formed, Curtin had been 'empowered to remove a Minister if at any time it was deemed desirable or/and necessary'.²² He never used that discretion, even in the face of provocation, although he did suspend Ward while the claims of the Brisbane Line were being investigated in 1943.

In part, the tension was kept within bounds because both leaders were careful not to push Caucus too far. If in doubt about the support they might get on a significant issue, they looked elsewhere for endorsement. When Curtin wanted to introduce conscription for service in the South Pacific, he put the issue before a Special Conference. It decided to refer the matter to the state branches. He then ruled out of order a motion in Caucus to oppose conscription on the grounds that the Conference was the only body competent to deal with the issue.²³ A second Special Conference supported his policy and the opponents in Caucus had to fall into line. In 1946 there was opposition in Caucus to the signing of the Bretton Woods Agreement. Chifley took the proposal to the Federal Executive before Caucus had a chance to consider it. The Federal Executive voted by 7 to 5 in favour of Australian participation and only then was Caucus allowed a debate. Chifley ruled that as the Federal Executive had plenary power between Conferences, its decision stood. Caucus managed to delay progress by arguing it should be submitted to a special Federal Conference, which was the only court of appeal from the Federal Executive decision. Two ministers voted against their leader. But Chifley was able to persuade three states to oppose the Conference and the question came back to Caucus. An attempt to give members a free vote in the House was lost on the voices, another attempt to send it to a Conference failed and Chifley's move to ratify the Agreement was carried by 33 votes to 24.²⁴ Whether he would have had the Agreement accepted at all without the support of external Party bodies is questionable.

Curtin and Chifley had learnt from the Scullin disaster. They allowed Caucus a voice, even if at times it was more limited in war than in peace. They listened, amended and responded. But where it really mattered they were prepared to use all the available weapons to get their way, and they did so successfully.

The Whitlam Government came to office on a wave of emotion and ambition. At the first meeting it appointed a separate chairman to conduct the meeting and thus relieve the Prime Minister of the task. It established a number of standing committees to review government legislation. Each member was allowed to nominate for three committees. Everyone could attend any committee but could only vote in their selected three ones; a consequence was that some committees became as large as the full Caucus meetings. Ministers were required to bring their legislation to the committee before it was presented in the Parliament; some chose to work cooperatively with their committee; others tried to bypass it, getting advance Cabinet approval in the hope that it might foreclose the debate.

There was still conflict. Collective Cabinet solidarity did not apply to Caucus.

CHIFLEY CAUCUS—WHITLAM CABINET

Fred Daly represented the Sydney metropolitan seats of Martin and Grayndler from August 1943 to November 1975. He held the portfolios of Services and Property, and Administrative Services, in the Whitlam Government. In a series of interviews recorded in 1983 as part of the Parliament Oral History Project, he reflected on the evolving decision-making processes in the FPLP, and the relationship between Labor Cabinets and the Caucus.

Image rights unavailable

When a member of Caucus in 1943–49

Well I think we all had a fair go there in those days. The Cabinet, of course, they come in to win their points. They would thrash it all out and bring it back to the party. And I've been there when the party has pretty well overturned things. And I'd say if I had the ability to express myself on my feet, there was ample opportunity to put your case. But you were up against powerful debaters and a Cabinet that sticks together. And they're able men. On finance, for instance, it's hard to topple them. I don't say you topple them many times, because they're there. The Cabinet has wisdom that we haven't got. They've got special confidential information. And they go in to win it. Chifley, I thought I was a great friend of his. And I put a great argument up against something he was bringing down on finance, and when I sat down, much to my consternation, he said 'Never heard so much bloody rot talked in my life'. Well that flops your ego back a bit. In other words, he knew no friends when he was trying to win his point. Good luck to him. But it wasn't personal; it was just his way.

When a minister in the Whitlam Government

I was in charge of electoral affairs amongst other things, and I would always take it to my committee. I'd formulate the policy. It would be endorsed in principle by the party, then

Fred Daly filled many roles during his 32 years in Caucus. In the mid-1950s he was on hand to join Caucus colleagues welcoming champion player Walter Lindrum to the Billiard Room of Parliament House. Left to right: Arthur Fuller, Jock Nelson, Daly, Gil Duthie, Walter Lindrum, Frank Stewart and Bill Edmonds. (Private collection, Lawrie Daly)

it would go to the Cabinet. But before it went to the Cabinet, I would draw up the legislation, and then I would go to the committee and get it endorsed. Having got it endorsed I would then come very strong to the party and say, 'This has been endorsed by the committee'. And that strengthened me. And I had very little trouble with the committee, because I always took it to them. And you'd compromise on a committee. You wouldn't get everything you wanted. And then it became the thing for the Cabinet. But on many occasions the Cabinet did things, or some occasions . . . they were overturned. And I thought that was a good thing, because the rank and file are closer to the people than you are.

But it had its imperfections in that sometimes they were short-circuited, these procedures. But if you properly followed it through as a Minister, worked out what was decided in principle, presented it to your committee, got it endorsed there, there was very little to stop you getting it through the Caucus.

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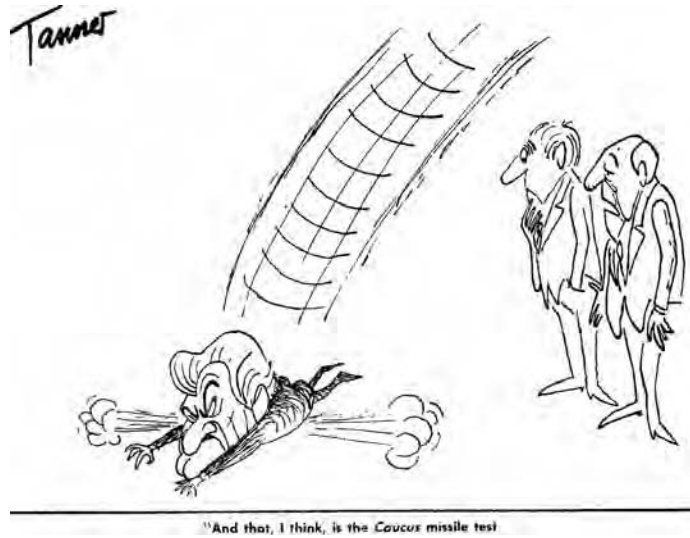
Gough Whitlam's third ministry. Clockwise from left: Don Willesee, Frank Crean, Frank Stewart, Fred Daly, Bill Hayden, Bill Morrison, Rex Patterson, Lance Barnard, Lionel Bowen, Doug McClelland, Doug Everingham, Reg Bishop, Jim Cavanagh, Les Johnson, Moss Cass, Gordon Bryant, John Wheeldon, Tom Uren (obscured), Kep Enderby, Charlie Jones, Kim Beazley (Snr), Ken Wriedt, Rex Connor, Clyde Cameron, Jim Cairns, Gough Whitlam and Lionel Murphy. (Old Parliament House)

Occasionally ministers who lost in Cabinet tried to get Caucus to overturn the decision. Even Prime Minister Whitlam, when he lost in Cabinet on parliamentary pay rises, fought on in Caucus. Caucus overturned some Cabinet decisions, too, particularly a decision to end concessions on gold mining after an appeal from the Member for Kalgoorlie. Sometimes Cabinet would concede little. It did not take decisions to raise interest rates to Caucus as they were regarded as confidential. Information on Budgets was often scarce, provided at a meeting held less than an hour before Parliament was given the details. In 1974 the Caucus, led by Cairns, tried to impose an alternative Budget strategy. The image presented was of a government uncertain of its directions.

As the government's fortunes declined, there was greater concern for its very survival. Hence, when Whitlam needed Caucus support to endorse his sacking of Cairns and Cameron, he obtained it. Nevertheless, just as Curtin and Chifley had learnt what to avoid from the Scullin period, so the Hawke Government, elected in 1983, believed there was a better way of managing relations between Cabinet and Caucus than the Whitlam Government had provided.

In 1982 Labor prepared for the possibility of office with a task force report developed primarily by Evans and Blewett. Among other proposals, it provided details of the way that Caucus and Cabinet would interact. After Hawke was elected Leader, the report was released as *Labor and the Quality of Government*. It emphasised the need for the 'maximum possible consultation to take place between the Minister and the appropriate Caucus Committee during the formulation of proposals for Cabinet consideration'.²⁵ There was an extensive commitment to process before the government was sworn in.

Bob Hawke did not consult with Caucus before he agreed to provide support for the MX missile test in 1985, but a compromise was reached which prevented a major clash between Caucus and the Ministry. (Les Tanner, *Age*, 7 February 1985; National Library of Australia)



Cabinet immediately strengthened its position. At the first meeting it agreed that the principle of collective responsibility would apply in Caucus as much as in public. Ministers would not be allowed to re-open battles in Caucus that they had lost in Cabinet; memories of the Whitlam Government warned against that practice. There was later one variation on this principle. Stewart West strongly objected to the Cabinet decision on uranium. He resigned from Cabinet but not from the Ministry, so that he could continue the fight in Caucus. The *Cabinet Handbook* was skilfully rewritten to take account of this unusual practice.

The convention of collective responsibility of Ministers for Government decisions is central to the Cabinet system of government. Decisions of Cabinet are reached collectively and are binding on Cabinet Ministers as decisions of the Government both outside and within the Party. This applies also to non-Cabinet Ministers co-opted to attend Cabinet meetings, in respect of the Submissions for which they are co-opted . . . All Ministers are expected to give their support in public debate to decisions of the Government; non-Cabinet Ministers, however, are not prevented from debating Cabinet decisions in Caucus in accordance with their own personal views.²⁶

It was an interesting reinterpretation of collective responsibility, allowing some ministers to fight a Cabinet decision in Caucus, as long as they were not involved in making it. Such an interpretation will be found in no other Westminster system; it is recognition of the powerful position of the Labor Caucus. Nevertheless the solidarity of ministers in Caucus that Cabinet imposed made it hard to overturn Cabinet decisions.

Above all, Caucus was now controlled by the factions. In a way that had never occurred before, the factions held meetings, selected their candidates for the Ministry and delivered the vote. The unpredictability of earlier times was reduced. A classic example was the MX missile case in early 1985. Hawke agreed to honour an agreement made by the previous Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, for Australia to provide logistical support to a US test of the MX missile over the Tasman Sea. Members of the Caucus were furious when they found out and

objected vehemently. The faction leaders talked to Hawke, who backed down once a satisfactory form of words had been arranged. The request for a Caucus debate was withdrawn. Thus a major clash between Caucus and the Ministry was averted without the imbroglios that had characterised earlier governments. Even when Cabinet made decisions that directly contradicted the Party Platform, such as the decision to export uranium to France, the factional system managed to contain the anger that existed in Caucus. Divisions occurred primarily when the desire for cohesion broke down as Keating made a run for the leadership in 1991; with half the Right and the Centre Left pushing Keating and the others still supporting Hawke, the split extended into Cabinet, which itself became hard to manage.

More often the Cabinet and Caucus worked together. At times ministers cooperated with their committees; they used them for feedback and advice. Others found them a burden—a group that did not understand what they sought to do, that had to be humoured, rather than listened to. The relationship could be tense. When Prime Minister Keating had an extended debate with the Telecommunications Committee over policy on phones, the vigour of the argument became a matter of public interest. He conducted an extensive campaign to persuade the Committee to his viewpoint, significant primarily because he felt the need to do it. There was little benefit in ramming it through; the acquiescence of Caucus, even if not its wholehearted agreement, was desirable.

The Hawke–Keating Government never faced a Caucus revolt as Hughes and Scullin had done. It never had ministers on the rampage as Ward had been in the 1940s. It did not present a picture of occasional chaos as the Whitlam Government had shown. Caucus looms large in the history of those governments, and less strongly in the more recent case, because it was a body that could, and in some cases did, undermine the government. Curtin and Chifley had to use all their skill and the different traditions of the Party to achieve their ends.

By 1983 those lessons had been learnt. The management of Caucus became accepted as a necessary part of governing. Faction discipline, collective responsibility and a degree of care in dealing with committees reduced the tension. At times members of Caucus might have felt that the teeth of Caucus had been drawn and that Cabinet was too easily able to get away with ignoring policy. But the return was a government that ruled for thirteen years.

Caucus might have been the nominally dominant body, but it never had the authority to force Cabinet action. It was often a partner in the formulation of legislation, when it had the time and skill to be involved. It was usually reactive, complaining of Cabinet's sins of commission or omission. It only met when Parliament was sitting, leaving the Cabinet less restrained for the other parts of the year. When Caucus acted in support of the Cabinet, its influence was considerable. When it took the Cabinet on, governments fell. Caucus had more rights than any other equivalent body in the parliamentary system, both in theory and in practice. Its first century provides examples of the effective use of its influence and cautionary tales of the potential dangers.

REPORTING CAUCUS: THE PRESS AND LABOR CRISES

Clem Lloyd

On 6 January 1932, a triumphal Joseph Aloysius Lyons, the newly elected Prime Minister of Australia, motored from Canberra to Goulburn to meet his jubilant Ministry arriving by train. Sitting beside him as an honoured guest was Joseph Aloysius Alexander, political correspondent of Keith Murdoch's Melbourne *Herald*. Prime Minister and journalist shared more than their given names, redolent of the Catholicism they staunchly practised. Both were northern Tasmanians, Lyons from Devonport and Alexander from nearby Burnie. Both had been reared in circumstances of family privation. After years of struggle, both had risen to the sunlit uplands of politics and the press. And both had contributed decisively to one of the great dramas of Australian political history—the destruction of the Scullin Labor Government.

Alexander was in exultant, even vainglorious, spirits as he rattled along rough country roads, savouring a famous victory with his Prime Minister. Earlier, he had noted in his diary:

Everyone is saying at Canberra that I have put Lyons in as Prime Minister. It is more than half true. I wish I had kept a diary last year. I must take time to commit the story to memory while the events are fresh in my mind.¹

Most new ministers were cordial but Alexander felt one or two were cold and abstracted: 'These people owe a lot to me but I won't get any thanks. I don't expect any.'² Later, he recorded jubilantly a series of private audiences with Lyons. Senior administrators and new government backbenchers were

deferential, accepting that he had 'influence in the government'. Public servants tantalised him with juicy morsels of gossip about their rejected Labor masters:

Percy [PM's chauffeur] spoke bitterly of Scullin's meanness. They had him up every day for six weeks to drive them to and from mass he says—and allowed him a quarter of an hour overtime for each trip—9d.³

His private comments on Labor politicians were scathing, even vilifying:

5 Jan. 1932. Theodore not coming to Canberra for final meeting Scullin Cabinet . . . With undoubted gifts he is a detestable man.

2 Feb. 1932. Lang left Loan Council and returned to Sydney . . . He looks a nasty piece of work—a greasy type of Jew.

Somewhat fatuously, Alexander noted: 'I must prepare a list of scoops for my own information.' Guided by Lyons, he broke two major poster stories in his newspaper on one day, celebrating with further hubris: 'It was one of the most successful days of my career . . . Political effects of this will be enormous. It was a master stroke of policy which I originated.'⁴ As the depleted, doleful rump of the Labor Caucus hobbled back to the national capital in late February, Alexander gave it scant mention. As a source of political power, it no longer mattered.

Alexander was constantly reporting back to Murdoch as the new government settled in. His proprietor rewarded Alexander lavishly by topping up his expenses, paying hotel bills for his wife, giving him generous allocations of Melbourne *Herald* shares, and sending him to Ottawa for the Imperial Conference. Alexander was effusively grateful:

I told him I could not sufficiently express my thanks for his munificence. He promised to give me some Herald shares . . . I hope he does not forget . . .
18 Feb. Before I left Melbourne KM told me he intended to give me as many H. Shares as possible, I thanked him for his exceeding kindness and told him it was a privilege and a happiness to work for him . . .⁵

On 2 February 1932 Alexander noted in his diary: 'Lyons and KM will lunch with me at Menzies [Hotel] on Thursday.' Alexander must have drunk the milk of paradise as he lunched with his Prime Minister and his boss, three accomplices in the greatest of all Caucus crises of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.

How realistic was Alexander's assessment of his role in destroying a Labor government by press agitation and manipulation within its Caucus? Unquestionably, Murdoch and Alexander were powerful players, patiently cultivating Lyons' mounting dissatisfaction with the Labor government, its Caucus and his own lack of influence within both. This manipulative support was crucial in Lyons' small dissident group splintering from Caucus early in 1931 and withdrawing support from Scullin's Government. But the defection of the six-member Lyons group did not cost the government its majority. What destroyed Scullin was the disloyalty and ultimate desertion of John 'Stabber Jack' Beasley's Caucus group supporting the New South Wales Premier, Jack Lang. Defection of both groups ultimately brought down the government through the alliance of all parliamentarians opposed to Scullin. This forced an early election in which Labor was

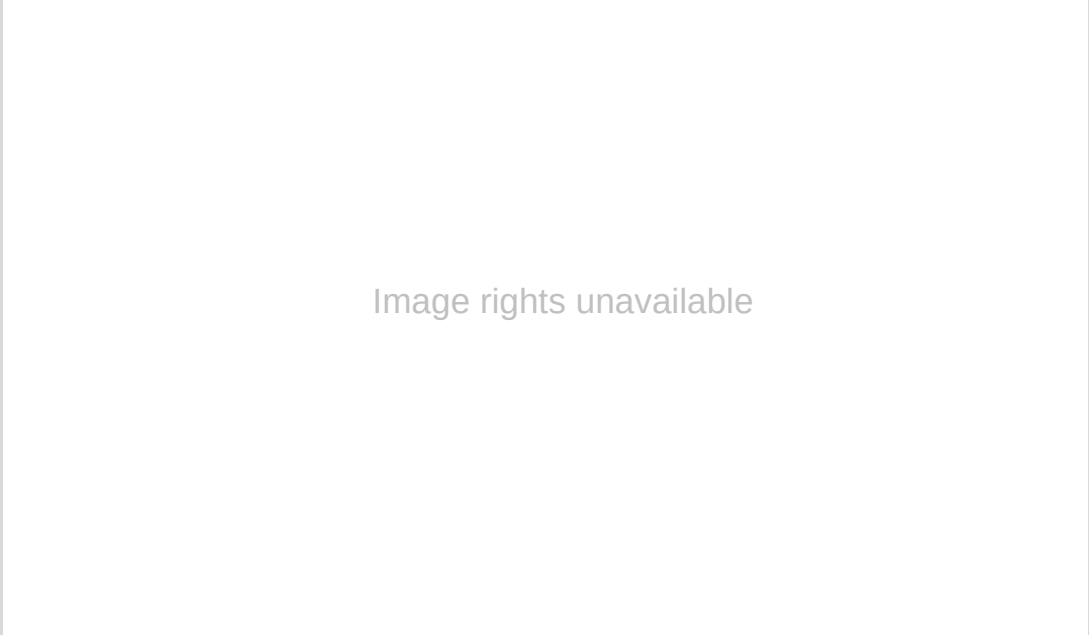
'PLUMP BUDDHA' AND CAUCUS MELTDOWN


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The Scullin Caucus seems to anticipate the devastating splits of 1931 with grim resignation. Prime Minister Scullin stands in the centre, at the front of the group at the rear of the room. Seated at the table are two future Labor leaders and prime ministers, Ben Chifley and John Curtin. On the extreme left is Joe Lyons, future Labor 'rat' and UAP Prime Minister. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives of Australia)

In which Warren Denning reports the Great Caucus Crisis of 1931.

Alan Reid likened Warren Denning to a 'plump Buddha' sitting deep in an easy chair in the Gallery common room discoursing on the strengths and weaknesses of past Prime Ministers. 'Don't get obsessed with details, my boy . . . always take the broad view,' he cautioned the youthful Reid. According to Reid, in a memoir published in 1982, Denning was a political participant as well as a journalist:

He was a born intriguer: he could not help himself. It was part of the nature of the man, though his intrigues were usually directed towards shaping future

events and rarely against an individual. And he had connections, powerful connections. He operated in the pre-1949 period when the House of Representatives, numbering seventy-four, and the Senate, numbering 30, were half the size they are today, and in those days relationships between Parliamentarians and individual pressmen were much closer.

Clem Lloyd, *Press and Parliament*, 1988

Adrift in the Great Depression

Newspapermen found the responsibility of telling the people of Australia the story of what was happening at Canberra, so that on the one hand incompetence might not be cloaked, and on

the other, grave national difficulties not intensified by hysteria or panic, was a heavy one. It was increased by the reticence of the Scullin Government, and its fear or dislike of publicity or criticism. Soon it was realised, however, that Ministers, public servants, financial experts, economic advisers, bankers and business men were all equally adrift in a vast ocean of uncertainty.

Warren Denning, *Caucus Crisis*, 1937

Covering Scullin's Caucus: stentorian voices, devastating days . . .

Journalists, far from attempting to 'listen in' to forbidden places, were embarrassed in their efforts to get far enough away from the disturbance to be able to proclaim that they were making no effort to overhear it . . . When the party doors opened after another of the innumerable truces had been called, most members of the various factions were only too willing to meet newspaper correspondents in any of the scores of places where the latter obtained their accounts of what was happening, and pour into listening ears their tale of woe. Indeed, it was possible, had we cared to do so, at times to sit in our own rooms being the Press Gallery, one floor above that on which the party meeting was being held, and hear snatches of argument hurled into the night by the stentorian voices of the vociferous antagonists.

Often we would be gathered in the press gallery lounge, taking it easy during a peaceful period in the House, when a terrific surge and rumble of voices beneath us told its own story. 'Hullo, the Labor Party must be meeting!' would flash around the gallery, and once again we would be ready for action. They were devastating days for all who participated in them.

Warren Denning, *Caucus Crisis*, 1937

Lyons and the Great Train Escape

All of a sudden one or two 'roundsmen'

heard that Mr [Labor minister J. A.] Lyons was leaving Canberra on the night train—that, and nothing more. But it was wrong. There was no reason why he should leave Canberra. The atmosphere became uneasy. Why . . . why . . . *why* was a senior minister leaving Parliament in the midst of a sitting, contrary to all practice? From this trifling fact, first mentioned, no doubt unintentionally, by some person responsible for booking the minister's seat, there came within two hours one of the most dramatic stories of Australian political history . . . In less than an hour the roundsmen who knew what was going on had their story; one of them simply raced down to the outgoing train and jumped on it, content to alight anywhere, hours later, as long as he had his story, and a first-class story he had. Other roundsmen, though, went home that night in blissful ignorance of what had happened, and were painfully scooped next morning—and those who had won out on the greatest story of the year had only to thank a vagrant whisper that Mr. Lyons was catching that night's train, plus the instinct which warned something was 'wrong'.

Warren Denning, *Inside Parliament*, 1946

The Debacle: Election Night 1931

I [Denning] was in the press room at the G.P.O. in Melbourne, where the successive returns were posted up as they filtered in from all the electorates throughout Australia. A landslide against Labor was evident from the start; Mr. [E. G.] Theodore, to the amazement of all, was hopelessly beaten in Dalley; Mr. [Frank] Brennan, one of Mr. Scullin's trustiest lieutenants had gone; name after name which had been prominent in Canberra affairs disappeared.

Warren Denning, *Caucus Crisis*, 1937

Clem Lloyd

routed by Lyons' United Australia Party. What is important in analysing the 'Great Caucus Crisis' of 1930–31 in terms of press power and influence is Alexander's perception of his role at the time. Indeed, the three great ALP Caucus splits of 1916–17, 1931–32 and 1954–55 represent marvellous case studies of political journalism in extended periods of galvanising Party crisis. Even more important, however, are the mundane machinery and conventions which have governed press and Party synergies in the 90 or so years when the Federal Labor Caucus was not in crisis.

N*ewsworthiness* as applied to political journalism essentially means the gathering and presentation of political material suitable for print and broadcast news media. In the Caucus context such product can be broken into two categories: *official news* and *unofficial news*. Official news is the formal Caucus assessment of what it wants to make public from its processes, whether strictly newsworthy or not. Press releases and briefings often have an institutional status and purpose other than the strict criteria of newsworthiness. Thus, official news is material authorised by Caucus to be released by designated Caucus officers, primarily to news media but also for other publicity and information purposes.

By contrast, unofficial news is news collected by journalists using proactive news-gathering techniques involving unauthorised sources, universally known as *leaks*, or *leaking*. Indeed, the term 'Caucus leaks' can be used to describe both journalistic sources, and a professional reality. Political journalists use standard methods of approach and interview to obtain such news, but apply rigorous conventions of source protection and attribution to safeguard Caucus sources. By journalistic convention, such details are not recorded, except in the professional memory.

Gathering of unofficial news is facilitated by the size, concentration, accessibility and single-point location of Caucus sources. Thus, the number of potential Caucus sources, or leaks, is limited only by Caucus numbers, as low as 40 in the lean years to as high as 100 or more in government. Caucus members may not leak for a variety of reasons: intrinsic loathing of journalists (rare now, but not unknown); reluctance to breach confidence; Party loyalty; damaging political implications; or fear of getting caught. Other Caucus members are what Gough Whitlam once described as 'publicity nymphomaniacs'—politicians who are incessant dribblers of Caucus news to journalists.

Apart from news directly related to Caucus processes, particularly formal meetings, Caucus provides an indispensable window into the ALP. For more than 70 years, the Chairman of Caucus was also Party Leader—most often Opposition Leader, with Labor out of power for all but 16 1/2 years. During protracted periods in Opposition, Caucus' newsworthiness rested largely on what it did publicly in the Parliament, and quasi-privately in the Caucus. In government, the Chairman of Caucus was Prime Minister, Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, and Chairman of Cabinet. Thus, Caucus had access to the whole range of government policy and administration, putting a premium on unofficial leaking. The burden of these multiple roles on the Leader was simplified in late 1972 just before the Whitlam Government was elected. An

elected Caucus Chairman replaced the Party Leader who, as Prime Minister, retained the Chair of Cabinet.

Through common membership, Caucus news functions are also interleaved with those of other ALP federal mechanisms. Since 1967, the four parliamentary leaders chosen by Caucus have been members of the sovereign National Conference and the National Executive (until a 1994 rules change meant only the Leader was *ex-officio* a member of the National Executive). Caucus members have crucial state, regional and electoral responsibilities as well as their federal parliamentary duties. An immense range of Labor political activity is concentrated in Parliament House over many months as the federal Caucus provides rich opportunities for news gathering from the electoral office to the prime ministerial suite. Thus, the dialectic of official and unofficial news from the Caucus is the core of news-gathering opportunities embracing all of the ALP. The following brief account of how this critical news core emerged covers mainly the first twenty years of Caucus history, which largely set the ground rules. The other primary theme is the increasing sophistication of official and unofficial Caucus news conventions in later years.

In the early years, the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery was dominated by Melbourne journalists, mostly veterans of Victorian colonial politics. The bounds between Caucus and outsiders were not drawn rigorously, and the aura of a gentleman's club lingered in the Caucus room. Labor supporters and favoured journalists such as Leonard V. Biggs of the Melbourne *Herald* were often invited guests given privileged access, including access to news. Most Caucus members were from interstate, often staying in Melbourne at weekends and recesses, living in rented rooms and boarding houses. Journalists cultivated them with hospitality, including holiday dwellings. Keith Murdoch, then an *Age* political roundsman, adroitly nurtured these political foundlings:

. . . Keith developed their friendship by taking them to the guest house conducted by his aunts in Sassafra, the quiet village in the Dandenongs . . . Murdoch also had a holiday shack . . . from early 1911. He spent many week-ends there with friends in the Parliament.⁶

'Young Murdoch' was a man who encouraged the friendship of public men, especially federal Caucus leaders who were the 'coming men in Australian public life'. His political leanings were more to Labor than to the conservatives, although he was never a 'Party man'. The rising Murdoch was particularly close to Fisher, whose advice he valued and who did much to advance him. Murdoch also cultivated Fisher's successor, William Morris (Billy) Hughes. When Murdoch moved to London in 1916–17 as head of an Australian press agency at the peak of World War I, Hughes used him as a virtual personal envoy in Whitehall.

Interaction between Caucus and the press was sufficiently flexible to permit key journalists to draft political material, even for policy speeches. In 1914, the implacably protectionist Melbourne *Age* sent its political roundsman, George Cockerill, with Fisher on the federal election campaign. The *Age* suspected that

some Laborites, including Fisher, retained free trade tendencies, although Fisher insisted his policies would be ‘absolutely Protectionist’:

[Cockerill] was deputed to make the trip and to satisfy himself that the Protectionist part of the speech was sound and unequivocal. Mr Fisher and [Cockerill] discussed the terms of the Protectionist declaration over several keen games of chess . . . Finally, [Cockerill] wrote this section of the speech and Mr Fisher adhered to it consistently throughout the campaign. Protection was a vote winner.⁷

The importance of the Caucus relationship with the press was acknowledged at its first formal meeting in May 1901 when it accepted that only the Acting Secretary should give information to the press. In the early days, unauthorised disclosures were not always leaks as sometimes the source was identified. For example, the *Argus* quoted J. M. Fowler, a Labor free-trader, as saying in Caucus that proposed legislation was ‘protection gone stark raving mad’, a quote irresistible to any journalist.⁸ Other sources were concealed by vague disclaimers: ‘Conversations disclose that Labor members . . .’

Increasingly, the power of formal disclosure devolved on the Leader. In March 1904, the Caucus agreed that ‘only the leader of the party be empowered to give any information to the press’.⁹ In practice, however, the Caucus Secretary released machinery decisions on legislation, proposed amendments and parliamentary business. For example, a detailed tariff schedule was released setting out the Party’s proposed duties on items including flannellettes, screws, galvanised iron, undressed timber, infants’ food, and ammunition and explosives (excepting fireworks).¹⁰ Through most of its life, the Caucus worked on the principle that putting as little on paper as possible inhibited leaking. The Caucus also sought to improve its public information effectiveness in a forum dominated by an often hostile press. A committee was appointed to ‘inquire into the necessity of supplying news to the federal press’, but there is no indication that it presented a practical program or even made a report. There was occasional debate about raising the quality of Labor’s relatively feeble press and publicity machinery. Funding of Labor press officers by levy of Caucus members was considered but rejected as impracticable.

Very early, the balance in the official/unofficial news equation tipped sharply towards systemic leaking. Blatant examples were brought before the Caucus as ‘breaches of confidence’ or ‘the question of the press getting the business of Caucus’.¹¹ Occasionally, draconian remedies were proposed. After several meetings about war policy in June 1914, the Caucus discussed ‘detailed reports’ published in several newspapers. A senior member, James Catts, moved to exclude the press from Parliament precincts while Party meetings were held. Further, Catts pressed for ‘an intimation’ to the press that ‘unofficial’ reports of ALP meetings were ‘repeatedly garbled and misrepresented’. If such unofficial reports continued to be published, urged Catts, action should be taken ‘to exclude press representatives from the house altogether’. Neither resolution was carried.¹² Nor was an attempt to treat ‘unofficial reports’ as a breach of parliamentary privilege. Clearly, there was no precedent for applying conventional privilege to private Party meetings. In July 1915, a ‘breach of confidence’

was raised about an 'unknown' member who disclosed the income tax schedule to the *Melbourne Age*. Fisher, then Prime Minister, was urged to demand the source from the *Age*. If this were denied, Fisher was urged to seek expulsion of *Age* journalists from Parliament 'until it disclosed the source of its information'. Again, such a punitive approach was rejected by Caucus.¹³

In the great conscription crisis of 1916, the crucial debates in Caucus exemplified the dramatic contrast between weight of official and unofficial news. Caucus met for the final crucial meeting on 14 November 1916, when government and Party split irrevocably, losing office and confined to the political wasteland for thirteen years. These epochal events were thus recorded in the Caucus minutes: 'Mr Hughes made a statement, after which he left the chair asking those who thought with him to follow him.'¹⁴ As a succinct resumé of a transforming historic event, this is beyond praise. Journalists, however, needed some background.

Hughes was both Prime Minister and Chairman of Caucus. His departure, accompanied by 24 other Caucus members, was the greatest sundering in the Caucus history, eclipsing even the mighty cleavages of 1931 and 1954–55 in its dimensions and ramifications. Yet, remarkably, it lacked the seething clamour and vindictive bitterness of the later splits. The *Argus* political correspondent emphasised how easy it was to get the story:

There was not the reticence which usually characterises Caucus meetings, for although the strictest precautions were taken against anyone who was not a member of the party being near the room, members subsequently discussed proceedings with a good deal of freedom, and a connected account of the meeting was not difficult to gather.¹⁵

The *Argus* account was strong on background, including an earlier meeting of Hughes' 'conspirators'. Sombre in tone, it concluded on a muted note: 'Mr Hughes's dramatic retirement caused some surprise and Mr McDonald was chosen [as Acting Chairman] merely to conclude the debate on the motion.'¹⁶

Without precedent, Hughes, the displaced Chairman and Leader, issued an 'official statement' to the press. Very likely, Hughes justified the official imprimatur because he retained the prime ministership and leadership of the crucial breakaway group. Hughes said prospects of a *modus vivendi* seemed hopeless. Regretful at severing a lifelong connection, he had no course but to withdraw. The new Caucus Chair and Leader, Frank Tudor, denounced Hughes' version as total misrepresentation. His account gave more detail than either the *Argus* or Hughes, outlining the motion of no confidence in Hughes, accusing him of assuming the role of a dictator, intimidating voters, tampering with the ballot, and leading the Party to ruin and disaster. Tudor's version was prepared by direction of the Caucus and given directly to journalists under the rubric, 'REPLY TO MR HUGHES—Labour Party's Official Statement'.¹⁷

Formally, the balance between official and unofficial news established in the early years was little changed over 40 years. Labor leaders largely dictated the official release and sought, unavailingly, to stem unofficial leaking.

Amended practices of 1972 (see above) have gradually enhanced the role of official disclosure, bringing it into a more systemic relationship with the traditional Caucus leak. Liberating Party leaders with multiple responsibilities from the Caucus Chair encouraged the emergence of a largely Caucus approach to its own news. It also permitted a tactical response to presenting official news in a way attractive to journalists anticipating the likely leaks and deflecting them with authorised information. It allowed prospective leaks to be identified and possibly contained. To some extent, it set the agenda by defining an official line and effectively inviting journalists to refute or weaken it if they could.

A triumvirate of Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary briefed journalists about half an hour after the Caucus meeting. According to Caucus Secretary, Sue West, the brief delay 'allows us time to review what we have written and get it into some form that makes sense and cannot be misconstrued or misinterpreted'.¹⁸ It also allowed journalists to tap unofficial sources before the meeting began, as Caucus Chair, Senator George Campbell, pointed out:

Normal practice is for the Caucus officers to run through the Leader's address with his media office to ensure we have interpreted his comments correctly. At the actual briefing, the Caucus Secretary deals with the legislation, while the Chair gives a summary of the Leader's address. We try to avoid any direct quotes from the Leader, and constantly advise the journos that it is a summary only. However, quite often we get confronted by journos with questions that are based on obvious leaks. In that context, never knowing how much the journos already know, it is advisable to be as open and honest as possible.¹⁹

After the precis of the address, any questions put to the Leader and their subjects are indicated. Journalists can then ask questions:

Questions can be interesting on occasions, especially if someone has briefed or leaked to a journo with more detail than we intended to give before we do the debrief. Sometimes the journos will ask if a particular issue has been raised. If it hasn't and we look at them blankly and say no, you get the feeling they think we are lying. Usually about 20 or so journos attend and range in experience from very junior new journos to experienced senior journos so the level of questioning can be very varied. The media would like a blow by blow report of the meeting and not our abridged version so on occasions it can almost be amusing as they fish for more than we are prepared to give.²⁰

The atmosphere of these briefings is also influenced by the prevailing political mood of the time or even by the meeting of the rival Coalition parties. Journalists also follow up newsworthy events involving Labor outside the Caucus but in the context of the meeting.

[Journalists] also have a few key phrases which almost causes a feeding frenzy. When [the ALP] were in government the words interest rates would almost cause the wire service journos to have a stroke as they would grab mobiles and race for the door sometimes not even taking any notice of what was being said. Some are always looking for the 'sexy' angles and issues.²¹

By tradition, the Caucus has operated its official news releases and press solely through its elected officers. It has never employed professional journalists

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Don Rodgers and Ben Chifley on the move in Canberra, January 1950. Rodgers became John Curtin's press secretary in 1937 and went on to serve Ben Chifley and 'Doc' Evatt. (National Library of Australia)

for press relations or liaison functions, despite occasional suggestions that this be done (as mentioned earlier in the chapter). This seems anachronistic in an increasingly corporatised era when media and information services are considered indispensable for effective promotion and media manipulation (or 'spin doctoring'). The most obvious explanation for this seeming anomaly is that from the beginning, federal Party leadership was embedded in the Caucus. As the responsibilities of the early Labor leaders grew, so did the pressures on them to obtain press and publicity assistance. This explains the informal reliance of Watson, Fisher and Hughes on Press Gallery members such as Biggs, Murdoch and Cockerill for advice and assistance with press relations. In government, the Caucus Chair, as Prime Minister, could draw on departmental officers for press services. Hughes was the first Australian Prime Minister to appoint personal press officers but, by this time, he had left the Labor Party. The first Opposition Leader as Caucus Chair to appoint a personal press officer was John Curtin, who in 1937 recruited Don Rodgers, initially on secondment from the *Labor Daily*. Rodgers' permanent appointment as Press Secretary was approved by Robert Gordon Menzies, then Attorney-General in Lyons' UAP Government, and he served Curtin, Ben Chifley and, briefly, H. V. Evatt as Press Secretary.

Rodgers' appointment opened the way for professional services at the disposal of the Caucus, but the distinction between the Leader's press secretary and Caucus formal news processes was preserved. When Labor returned to government in 1972, the Party was engulfed in a flood of press secretaries, several recruited from the Press Gallery. By this time, the Party leadership had been separated from the Caucus Chair and the ministerial press secretaries did not perform official services for the Caucus. Indeed, their interests were

sometimes inimical to those of the Caucus because, particularly in the turbulent circumstances of the Whitlam Government, they pushed ministerial and department interests at the expense of broad Caucus interests. This largely explains why the Caucus preserved its distance from press processes linked to Cabinet, public policy and public administration. The movement of journalists between the Press Gallery and Labor leadership as press secretaries also equipped political journalists with a sharper understanding of the Caucus, its membership and its conventional functions.

If Joe Alexander epitomised press practice promoting the break-up of the Scullin government by insidious pressure on Caucus nerve ends, Alan Reid exemplified the subtle, more diffusive role of journalists in the Labor 'Split' of the mid-1950s. Reid was among the first journalists to identify the fissiparous agencies emerging in the Labor Party from the early 1950s. His early stories in the Sydney *Sun* alerted many Australians for the first time to the manipulation within the labour movement of the Catholic Social Movement, known emphatically as 'The Movement' during the protracted crisis. His primary reporting of the 'Split' was done for Sir Frank Packer's *Daily Telegraph*. Reid kept a discerning eye on the trials and tribulations of the ALP in the aftermath of the 'Split' for almost twenty years until the ultimately rejuvenated Party returned to government in December 1972.

During the 1930s, in his early years in the Canberra gallery, Reid learnt much from Joe Alexander. According to Reid, Alexander had the reputation as having 'set in motion [forces] which changed governments in Australia':

He had an uncanny sense, Joe did, just from watching people, of realising what they were talking about and being able to hit the mark pretty well . . . Joe realises [sic] all the forces that were at work in the show, as well as these mechanical leaks. He could play one off against the other and do it very well. Oh, a very brilliant fellow Joe.²²

Like Alexander, in his era Reid was pre-eminent in the masterly reporting of the Labor Caucus. He emulated Alexander's prowess in avoiding the 'mechanical' leaks by identifying the forces at work within the Caucus, and subtly setting source against source to build up a composite picture that usually was unerringly accurate. Reid agreed that in the early years he must have 'coloured' his copy in favour of helpful Caucus sources, a practice he disavowed when at the height of his powers. He became a convinced disciple of a wholly professional relationship: 'In other words, there's no doubt about it, if you've got friends in politics you're inhibited.'²³

In his papers, Reid included a valuable document providing a rare insight into the techniques of compiling accurate Caucus stories based largely on leaked material from protected, unattributable sources. Excerpts from the document are published in the box on page 196. Briefly, it comprises questions put by Reid to Lance Barnard, a former Labor Deputy Prime Minister, after the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government in November 1975. Embittered by his loss of the Deputy Prime Ministership in May 1974, Barnard quit the government in mid-1975 and accepted a post as Ambassador to Sweden. In 1976,

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*Members of the Canberra Press Gallery, December 1935. Back: F. B. Tremayne, W. A. Thomson, L. R. McLennan, E. D. Gardener. Third row: G. Burch, R. Nall, M. W. Byrne, G. H. Wade, K. Ingram. Second row: T. Carrington, R. B. Leonard, L. McDonnell, O. G. Olsen, G. Dempsey. Front: B. J. Anderson, D. K. Rodgers, E. J. Hewitt, F. J. Murray, W. F. Whyte, H. S. Innes, L. E. Fitzgerald, J. A. Alexander, E. C. O'Loughlin. By the late 1940s Joseph Aloysius Alexander, Melbourne **Herald** hack and confidante of Joe Lyons, was disillusioned with both Lyons and **Herald** proprietor, Keith Murdoch. (Chifley Collection, National Library of Australia)*

Reid published a book called *The Whitlam Venture*, which was a largely unflattering critique of three years of Labor government. His questions to Barnard try to tease out accurate, non-attributable material for his book. It provides an intriguing locus into the seductive, extractive and corroborative skills of a master craftsman. The key points of technique may be summarised as follows.

- *Flattery.* While stopping short of obsequiousness, the tone is deferential and subtly flattering; nothing suggests that Reid has any reservations about what Barnard presumably has told him, and that he is trying to confirm for publication.
- *Kinship.* While Reid does not directly affirm support for ALP politics, he projects sympathy for the old-style labour man, protectionist and non-technocrat. He is making a pitch to a Labor politician of traditional right-wing background.
- *Information flows.* Note the element of 'tit for tat' in precipitating a flow of information between journalist and source. The journalist tells the source something he might not know, but would be gratified to know. This may generate reciprocal information and corroboration.
- *Justification.* Reid affirms persuasively that Barnard has to state and justify his case without going explicitly on the record. Thus, he pitches for more information and confirmation.

THE CRAFT OF CAUCUS LEAKING

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Left: Alan Reid pictured at a National Press Club lunch in December 1967. (National Library of Australia) Right: Lance Barnard served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence in successive Whitlam Ministries before resigning from Parliament in 1975. (National Library of Australia)

In which Alan Reid, the ‘Red Fox’, probes for a leak in the Caucus dyke.

10 February 1976: Alan Reid to Lance Barnard

I'm glad you were away for the debacle [of the 1975 election]. It would have broken your heart. You've doubtlessly heard the laudatory things that Fraser had to say about you. Well deserved, in my view. But things within the ALP aren't going to improve. Not for a while at least. Hawke is savage. Though Gough has subsequently welshed, Gough undoubtedly made a deal with Hawke that if Hawke used persuasion on people in caucus to get them to retain Gough in the leadership, Gough would relinquish the leadership as soon as Hawke could arrange a seat that would get him, Hawke, into the Parliament, so as to give Hawke a crack at the leadership. Last night on TV Gough said that he was there to stay and intended, short of death or being crippled, to lead at the next elections. Billy Hayden is bitter. He gave a report also last night to the Queensland Executive.

In it he said that the cause of the ALP's downfall was plain inefficiency over the past twelve months. As Gough headed the team, Gough must take responsibility for whatever inefficiency emerged. It is a very unhappy team and picture.

I am writing to you to ask you to give some replies to questions. We missed having that talk before you left. I repeat the pledge I gave you then. I shall not quote you. I shall take complete responsibility for what I write in the book which I am now preparing. I shall see that you are not identified in any way as my informant. As soon as I have absorbed the substance of your replies I shall destroy the replies. The only person who will ever see them will be me.

I am sending the questions to you in the form that follows so as to avoid the need for a typiste [sic]. I thought if I did it this way, you could either send back the actual sheets I send you or photostat the questions if you want to keep a record of the questions and answers. In that way, we keep it entirely between you and me. The questions start on the next page.

1. When at Surfers' Paradise you and [a staff member] were splitting up the ministry between the two planes for Arthur's [Calwell] Melbourne funeral, and Gough said of Cairns and Murphy 'Put them on the same plane as me. If I go in I want those two bastards to go in with me' where did that conversation take place. In the conference room? In Gough's suite? In your suite?
2. In what circumstances did you learn about the Gair appointment [as ambassador to Ireland]? Was it from the newspapers? Or from Gough himself? My memory [is] that you told me that you reproached him bitterly for making a deal that [Foreign Minister] Willesee had refused to make. Is my memory correct?
3. How soon after this did you bail up over his proposal to appoint [left-wing Caucus member] Bert James as administrator of Norfolk Island? My memory is that you told me you warned him that it would be disastrous—another obvious case of jobs for the boys. You refused to be a party to it and warned him that you would oppose him in cabinet. Is my memory correct? How did he react? Why James? . . . Did he resent this type of opposition from you? Was it partly responsible for his failure to support you in any way when Cairns challenged you for the deputy leadership?
9. Did you warn him that he might have difficulty in [Barnard's electorate] Bass? I've heard a story which I intended to check with you before you left that you did, but that he brushed your misgivings aside, saying that he would personally campaign in Bass and that would ensure that it stayed ALP?
10. My memory is that you told me that Whitlam had first offered the governor-generalship to young [Kenneth] Myer. How sure are you of this? Was there a letter to Myer? Did you see the letter . . .? Have

you a copy of the letter? If you have can I have a copy? . . .

11. Whitlam then offered the job [of Governor-General] to you. When? Have you a precise date? Where did he make the offer? In what circumstances? Was anyone else present? Did he ever put the offer formally into writing? If he did can I have a copy of the letter? Why did you knock it back (it's ironical, isn't it, to think how the course of history might have been changed if you had accepted it)?
14. What were your relationships with Gough after Cairns became deputy leader? Did Gough keep you informed in view of your previous record of loyalty to him? Or did he freeze you out? How serious a factor in your relationship was the tariff issue, on which Gough seemed to have a blind spot while you seemed more interested in preserving jobs for Australians than in following some finesounding but unworkable economic theory?
15. Did Gough ever put the acid on you to get rid of [Sir Arthur] Tange? If so what was your reaction? My memory is that you warned him that he should not take such frequent trips. Is my memory correct?

Lance, I think it is important that you give your side of the story. Most of the books currently being written are being written by one-eyed Whitlam supporters, and I think that people like yourself, Frank Crean, and a few others of the oldfashioned ALP types who believe that jobs, housing and such matters are more important than homosexuality, etc., will get short shrift.

If there is anything else you think I should know, let me have it. Naturally, I would like my book to be, as I hope my past books have been, the most authoritative and accurate as well as balanced.

(These extracts are from documents preserved in Alan Reid's papers, Australian National Library MS.)

Clem Lloyd

- *Reinforcement.* Clearly, Barnard has already supplied much of this information to Reid, probably during informal, unattributable chats. Now, Reid seeks to strengthen and extend what he knows or suspects.
- *Confirmation.* Reid goes beyond reinforcement to seek confirmation or denial of what he has, mostly from Barnard but also from other sources which he wants Barnard to confirm.
- *Documentation.* Documents are essential for verifying and signifying all leaks. Caucus documentation is mostly sparse and routine. Reid's reputation, and the integrity of his reporting, was buttressed by his ability to provide authentic documentation, beyond challenge.
- *Protection.* Reid has pledged Barnard absolute protection. ('I shall see that you are not identified in any way as my informant.') This guarantee of absolute secrecy depends very much on his established reputation for scrupulously protecting sources.
- *Clinching the deal.* There is no evidence in Reid's papers that Barnard responded in any way to this detailed request for confidential information. He may have provided the information sought, and Reid destroyed it as he promised. It is verifiable fact, however, that much of the material Reid sought from Barnard appeared in *The Whitlam Venture*, some of it with embellishment. Other material is sourced obliquely to 'Friends of Barnard'. Reid must have satisfied himself about the accuracy of the material, either through direct confirmation from Barnard, or by corroboration from other, mostly Caucus, sources.²⁴

We left Joe Alexander in early 1932 at the pinnacle of his career, savouring his triumphs, Keith Murdoch's favourite. Over the following twelve years he remained the prince of the Press Gallery—admired without stint by his colleagues, often feared and loathed by politicians but grudgingly respected for his presumed power and unquestioned professionalism. Retrospectively, Alexander acknowledged his privileged view of the unfurling political cycles of Australian political history:

I saw at close hand the rise of J. A. Lyons, his triumph in three successive elections . . . then the decline of his government and his death in 1939 on the brink of World War II. I saw at very close hand the short terms of Menzies and Fadden, and the long sustained successes of John Curtin, Australia's great wartime leader, which was terminated by his untimely death in office.²⁵

Although these were great years for Alexander, the change in tone from the vainglorious to the elegiac is unmistakable. He had grown increasingly disillusioned with Lyons and the UAP Government. Murdoch had given him praise, recognition, shares, high expenses and travel. He had not given him what he most craved—the status of an editor, or even a managing editor, rather than that of Keith Murdoch's Canberra listening post and occasional assassin. Alexander was a classic case of the indispensable employee in a handsomely rewarded job which was essentially dead-end. While still respecting Murdoch's immense abilities, the scales fell from his eyes. He sensed how Murdoch, and Lyons, had

exploited him and, consequently, reassessed his own influence and achievements less grandiloquently. Above all, he found a new prince in John Curtin and became privately critical of Murdoch, particularly where Murdoch clashed with Alexander's changing perception of the national interest. His reverence for Curtin was distilled in a simile eloquent, although a little obscure—of John Curtin he wrote: 'the stone rejected by the builder became the cornerstone of the temple'.²⁶ Curtin was the greatest prime minister he had known—'a brilliant leader, a true patriot, a marvellous conciliator but firm enough to withstand the will of Winston Churchill'.²⁷

Alexander was completely convinced that Curtin's warm relationship with political journalists during World War II brought the prime ministership to the press, in time of war an integral national institution. Previously, direct contact between the Prime Minister and the press 'at top level', where it had existed at all, had been via social functions, official dinners, private meetings and gentlemen's club luncheons.²⁸

Before Mr Curtin's time . . . a PM would send a special man, one of his personal cronies, down to Melbourne to talk with editors, and this was a very unsatisfactory way of doing things, both for the Press and the PM—but Mr Curtin had no inclination for this method of doing business in war-time . . .²⁹

Much has been written about the milieu and process of Curtin's wartime press conferences with the so-called 'Travelling Circus' of Canberra journalists who adhered to his formal entourage during the war. Alexander assessed them as providing an inward flow of ideas of great value to the government from journalists trained in the judgement of public opinion, and an outward flow from the government to journalists of confidential war information of the highest importance. Thus, the journalists mediated between their management, and Curtin's government and Caucus. Such a compact between prime minister and journalists, of course, was vastly different from the secret conclave of Lyons, Murdoch and Alexander which had smitten Scullin's Labor Caucus.

Despite Alexander's prominence in Curtin's 'Travelling Circus', and his enthusiastic acceptance of its conventions, he found himself in the often invidious position of personal intermediary between Murdoch and Curtin, the old icon and the new. The relationship between the Prime Minister and the nation's pre-eminent press baron became increasingly poisonous as the war advanced. There was more than a touch of Orson Welles' megalomaniacal *Citizen Kane* about how Murdoch traduced Curtin, his war policies and leadership. He flayed Curtin and his government in the Murdoch press, much of the most trenchant excoriation penned, and signed, by his own hand. Murdoch's judgements and reactions were often sadly astray, compared with his acuity in World War I. Curtin had his measure and trumped him repeatedly.

Murdoch's campaign against Curtin distressed Alexander and heightened his disenchantment:

. . . [It was] the first time I had known [Murdoch], in a decade or more, to come down into the arena and write articles himself, on matters relating to the conduct of the war . . . These long, boldly featured articles in 'The Herald' made a painful impression on me, because the country was at war and in grave

WHEN RUPERT WAS A LABORITE . . .

In which Rupert Murdoch waves the scarlet banner high.

22 May 1949: Keith Murdoch to Prime Minister Ben Chifley

I meant also to ask you to shake hands with my 18-year-old student son [Rupert] who is at present a zealous Laborite but will I think (probably) eventually travel the same course of his father!

30 May 1949: Ben Chifley to Keith Murdoch

I will be very glad to meet your son when he comes to Canberra. I am glad to know that whatever may happen to him ultimately, at present he has some strong democratic tendencies . . .

7 November 1950: Rupert Murdoch to Ben Chifley

In dismissing revaluation as not being the answer to the present inflation in Australia you don't give any alternative policy . . . Greatly increased taxation, admittedly unpopular, with a large budgetary surplus is surely not the whole answer. But excuse all this please!—it seems terribly insolent of a young undergraduate bothering you with such trite stuff!

You ask me what I think of Nye Bevan! Last night he gave Churchill Hell over the latest piece of Tory quackery—a promise of 300,000 houses a year, and did it so effectively that he even drew a few of the Liberals out of their mothballs onto the government benches. Nevertheless, dishonest and downright despicable though such Tory hypocrisy may be, the fact remains that people are actually ready to be fooled by this sort of thing—at least that is what appears to be the case here in this country. But to return to Bevan, he stands out in the party as the most prominent, brilliant and able of the Left wing . . . Personally, while admiring him greatly for all his gifts (notably sincerity and honesty) I rather prefer Richard

Crossman . . . all his speeches seem to display a brilliant mind, thoroughly clear and yet totally convinced in the rightness of socialism. A strong Leftist, he is not however a fanatic! . . .

May I ask a favour of you? . . . for my work here, would it be possible for you to send me a copy of the White Paper on Full Employment? (At the moment I am groping in the depths of Keynes!) . . .

One hears nothing now in the papers of the Mighty Giant 'Down Under' [R. G. Menzies]! But, if I may [say] so, perhaps a little cheekily, Labor's climbing down (it appeared like that here) over the Communist Dissolution Bill has disappointed many who held out hopes for the preservation of normal human liberties in Australia. Perhaps in future when travelling Menzies will be considered a member of a party advancing totalitarian theories and will be excluded from the United States!!

I trust that the leader-writers of the 'Murdoch Press' are behaving themselves!?! Dad says he is getting much worse treatment from the present crowd than you would even have contemplated!

22 November 1950: Ben Chifley to Rupert Murdoch

I note your comment regarding revaluation. I fully agree that in rejecting revaluation as a cure for our economic ills there should be some alternative programme . . . None of these measures, of course, are popular proposals and, as the Commonwealth Government in its election promises undertook to put value back into the £., one would have expected they would have given thought to world conditions, but their promise remains unfulfilled . . .

You will certainly find Keynes solid reading. I think he had a splendid brain and there can be no doubt about the great influence he had on economic thought, even in U.S.A.

I don't think we are receiving any worse treatment from the Murdoch Press than previously, which is at least something to be thankful for.

17 March 1951: Rupert Murdoch to Ben Chifley

I see in The Times that an election is imminent in Australia and so I am writing this mainly to wish you every success in the coming struggle. Although I imagine that if you win you have an ungodly mess to clear up before even being able to tackle the major problems, it seems to me and the great majority of the many Australian students at this university who follow home affairs fairly dispassionately that any continuance of the present [Menzies] regime will prove disastrous to the country. What do you think your chances are? You should certainly have some pretty telling and formidable arguments to put across to the electorate! . . . Admittedly, some of Menzies' speeches about being at war with Russia have been outrageous to the point of criminal, but mustn't we do our share with Britain? . . .

[Eric] Harrison [Australian High Commissioner] was down here the other day and we turned on a dinner for him and his wife. The whole function was incredibly dull except for a statement from the kindly Mrs Harrison that she

was 'always at the Residence' ready to dispense advice to the young! Harrison finally buried the evening with a painfully long speech (40 minutes) about what he meant by the word 'Empire'. It turned out that he didn't know himself!! But I am glad to say that he will soon be all yours again at Canberra!

I am now College Secretary of the British Labour Party! There's nothing like family tradition! . . .

With all best wishes for the coming election . . .

31 March: Ben Chifley to Rupert Murdoch

We are now in the throes of an Election and naturally one does not have much time for writing.

I enjoyed your comments regarding Harrison and the dinner. Eric is indeed very pompous, but Mrs. Harrison is quite a charming woman.

I agree with what you say, that any real honest policy cannot be attractive to taxpayers, particularly if a very large re-armament programme is to be undertaken.

Glad to know you are taking an active interest in the Party . . .

(These extracts are from correspondence preserved in the manuscript papers of D. K. Rodgers, Australian National Library.)

Clem Lloyd

danger, and certainly there was no one else who could conceivably be considered as taking Curtin's place.³⁰

Alexander was also the patsy when Curtin, incensed by published charges of disloyalty, gave Murdoch 24 hours to publish a full apology or face a £20 000 libel writ. After Murdoch temporised with a possible minor correction, Alexander warned him that only a full correction prominently displayed would satisfy the Prime Minister: 'KM said, "Tell him I shall do what he asks," and rang off.'³¹

Alexander's admiration for Curtin and his ready acceptance of Labor's war policy was his professional salvation. Remarkably, for a conservative Catholic, Alexander was an enthusiastic student of Russian language and politics. In 1944, when he was in his early fifties, he pressed Curtin as a wartime service to appoint him First Secretary of the Australian Legation in Moscow. Curtin agreed, and Alexander performed a key diplomatic role from 1944 to late 1947. He resigned from the Melbourne *Herald* before going to Moscow, but Murdoch later took

him back as a feature writer. Alexander never returned to Canberra or political writing. He had used his professional skills to break one Labor government then, in a transcendent national crisis, turned his pen and immense experience over to the respecting service of another. There is no more remarkable career in Australian political journalism.³²

By contrast, Alexander's great mentor, Keith Murdoch, a towering figure during World War I, was wretchedly out of touch in the Pacific war. His instincts, judgements and impulses were often sadly astray. Curtin spurned his influence and scorned his criticism. The friend of Fisher, envoy of Hughes, guiding lantern of Lyons, it seemed that Murdoch's long association with the Labor Party, for better or worse had come to an end.

Astoundingly, in the immediate post-war years, Murdoch forged with Prime Minister J. B. 'Ben' Chifley the closest, and most satisfying, of his political liaisons with Labor leaders (see the correspondence excerpts in the box on pages 200–1). Murdoch was able to talk with Chifley frankly, affably and without rancour, even though the Murdoch press pilloried Chifley's government and Caucus. The tone of Murdoch's correspondence with Chifley was intimate, jocular and even tinged with sarcasm: 'As a psychologist, economist, banker and political leader, it may interest you [Chifley] to know that the newsprint effort in Australia, and now in New Zealand, brings practically no rewards to those who do the work.'³³ Their interchanges over Murdoch's often remorseless attitudes to Labor were spirited but civilised, Chifley rather generously attributing much of the blame to Murdoch's editors. He was also the more dispassionate, with Murdoch sometimes inclined to overstate his case:

Some newspapers (including those I am for the present looking after) are strictly against your national policies, thinking them weakening, (even destructive) of our fibre; but I would rather sell matches in the streets than suppress or distort the facts.³⁴

When Chifley was defeated in 1949, Murdoch wrote him a sympathetic letter urging him to take a long sea holiday, and 'do write a weekly column for the Murdoch press'. Murdoch sought repeated concessions, even favours, from Chifley involving newsprint, foreign exchange, even property valuations. Invariably, he got them.

In return, he gave Chifley an ambivalent legacy in the acquaintance of his son, Rupert. In May 1949, Murdoch asked Chifley to 'shake hands' with his '18-year-old student son'. Chifley replied: 'I will be very glad to meet your son when he comes to Canberra. I am glad to know that whatever may happen to him ultimately, at present he has some strong democratic tendencies . . .'³⁵

Chifley and Rupert Murdoch met, got on well and corresponded amiably about the virtues of socialism, the ineptitude of the British Tories and political economy. Chifley was Opposition Leader at the time, and Rupert Murdoch a student at Worcester College, Oxford. Introducing Rupert to Chifley, Murdoch described his son as 'at present a zealous Laborite but will I think (probably) eventually travel the same course of his father'. He was right, of course!

SPLITS: CONSEQUENCES AND LESSONS

John Faulkner

The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) shattered in major splits on three occasions—in 1916 over the issue of military conscription; in 1931 when traumatised by economic crisis during the Great Depression; and in 1954–55 when challenged for a response to communism. These splits were catastrophic for Labor, resulting in political irrelevance that kept it out of office for decades.

Fundamental political differences led to the splits, but other influences helped shape their nature and how they played out: the challenge of difficult times; the Party leadership of the day; the Party's organisational rules, institutions and traditions; and the way individuals in the Party confronted these crises.

The factions that would help contain differences within Caucus in the 1980s and 1990s were neither as formalised nor as significant in the 1950s, let alone during the earlier splits. The powers of the Federal Executive and Federal Conference in 1916 or 1931 bore little resemblance to the powers of the National Executive and National Conference in 2001 as the FPLP celebrated its centenary. These features of the modern Party were positive consequences of the traumatic internal schisms of earlier years. But at the time of the first split in 1916, the Labor Party was in its infancy and confronting the most divisive issue to face the new nation.

The Australian Labor Party had begun with the conviction that its parliamentary representatives should serve the interests of working people and their struggle to achieve better wages and conditions. The principle of working-class solidarity was paramount. Every parliamentary representative in New South Wales from the mid-1890s was required to pledge support for the Platform

determined by the Party Conference and to accept the majority vote in a properly constituted Caucus, where every parliamentarian had an equal vote and an equal say.¹ Labor parliamentarians were forbidden from joining forces with any other party. Those who did not adhere to these rules would be expelled.

For Labor's opponents, the very idea of a Caucus making binding decisions on leaders and members of Parliament was anathema. Caucus authority was seen to cut across the notion of the 'independence' of the Parliamentary representative, one of the long-held tenets of liberal democracy. Labor's novel theory of democracy² was bitterly resented and ferociously attacked by conservatives. Policy-making external to the Parliament and outside direction were considered even more repugnant. Labor's opponents ritually exulted in highlighting that Labor parliamentarians and Labor governments did not control their own agenda. When the FPLP was formed in Melbourne in May 1901, a strictly enforced Caucus solidarity became its core organisational principle. After ten years of colonial labour experience, the new members of the FPLP accepted the constraints of the Pledge and the Caucus.³ Or so it was thought. But a party where parliamentarians were required to accept the dual disciplines of the majority view of Caucus and policies determined by the Party rank and file would inevitably encounter tensions in its relationship with its elected parliamentarians. Members of the labour movement sometimes expressed frustration at the priorities of Caucus and the pace at which it pursued reform. Despite the Pledge, some of Labor's parliamentary representatives resented being dictated to by the extra-parliamentary Party. These parliamentarians saw themselves as being at the frontline of policy debate and best placed to determine Labor's parliamentary priorities and to make measured and informed judgements about complex political issues.

By 1916, the Labor Prime Minister W. M. Hughes personified this tension. The irascible and manipulative Hughes, who had coveted the Labor leadership since Federation, succeeded Andrew Fisher as Prime Minister in 1915. He was consumed by the war effort. After an extensive seven-month tour of Europe in 1916, where he had been feted by the Allied High Command, Hughes returned to Australia with the conviction that he possessed first-hand information about the military situation on the Western Front out of the reach of his colleagues. His pre-eminent loyalty was to the British Empire. He was determined to send massive numbers of additional troops abroad, regardless of the disposition of his Cabinet or Caucus—let alone the views of the Party he led.

At the same time, growing numbers in the Party and in the broader labour movement were questioning Australia's continuing involvement in the war. They were appalled by the slaughter and wanted to concentrate on implementing Labor's domestic Platform. Others within the Party did campaign for extra troops, but insisted that voluntary recruiting would suffice. Either way, most believed overseas conscription was simply out of the question. Throughout 1916, these internal divisions grew. Hughes considered three ways of introducing conscription: by Act of Parliament, by regulation, or by referendum. All would require the majority support of Caucus in the first instance. For Hughes, the advantage of a referendum was clear—support for conscription was much more



'A LABOR CONFERENCE'. In the lead-up to the conscription referendum on 28 October 1916, Caucus was the scene of heated debate and division that eventually spilled over onto the floor of the Parliament. In this cartoon, David Low mimics his celebrated earlier comment on Hughes' animated behaviour as a member of the British War Cabinet. (Bulletin, 28 September 1916; National Library of Australia)

likely to come from the broader community than from the trade union movement, his Party or Caucus. The Caucus could be 'disciplined' later, when Hughes would have the moral and political authority of a successful referendum vote.

The Caucus debate in August 1916 on Hughes' referendum proposal ground on for four days. He prevailed with a bare 23 to 21 majority. But when the Military Service Referendum Bill was debated in Parliament, the Caucus divisions boiled over publicly: Frank Tudor resigned from the Ministry, and a number of prominent Caucus members opposed the Bill. Criticism of Hughes' attitude was exemplified by Frank Anstey's statement during the debate: 'The Prime Minister says, "I see the light". He may, but to me that light seems a wreckers' light on a rock-bound coast . . . that is strewn with dead men and the robber's harvest.'⁴

Hughes was not only under sustained attack in Caucus. Under no illusions about the strength of the extra-parliamentary Party's opposition to conscription, he visited the state branches in an effort to convince the Party organisation to support his position. The efforts were futile. He faced trenchant opposition and antagonism on all fronts. Even before the referendum vote, Hughes was expelled by the New South Wales Executive and his own local league (as ALP branches were then known).

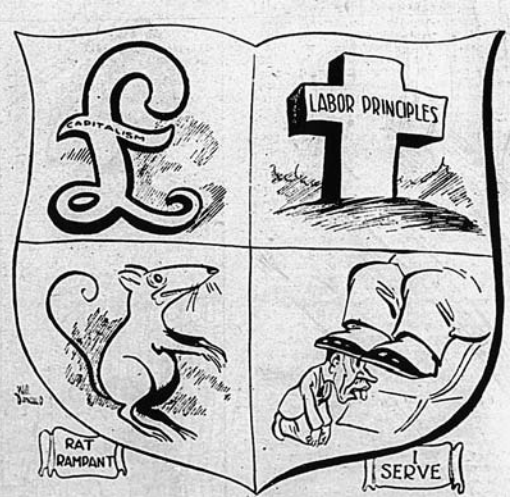
The referendum campaign was extraordinarily bitter, and shook the Labor Party to its roots. Arguments were mounted that conscription would take

THE WALKOUT

Billy Hughes' loyal defence minister, Senator George Pearce, offered this account of the historic walkout of Hughes and his supporters on 14 November 1916. It appears in his autobiography *Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-seven Years of Parliament*.

We agreed that the time had arrived for decisive action, that it was palpably impossible to hold the party together any longer, except at the price of surrender . . . The party resumed its session after dinner. The militants, now confident of victory, had gone so far as to secretly pick their new Cabinet, and Mr. J. H. Catts, a New South Wales member, resumed the discussion with a bitter attack on Mr. Hughes. The Prime Minister sat calmly smoking a cigarette; suddenly he rose and held up his hand. There fell a silence on the meeting; even Mr. Catts paused in his harangue.

Mr. Hughes put down his cigarette, gathered up his papers and in a strong, determined voice, said, 'Enough of this; those who are prepared to stand by the British Empire and to see the War through to the end, please come with me.' He thereupon walked slowly to the door. Mr. Catts remained standing silent in open-mouthed astonishment. Twenty-three of those present rose to their feet simultaneously and followed the Prime Minister from the room. I went on ahead and unlocked the door of the Senate



SUGGESTED COAT OF ARMS FOR
SIR GEORGE PEARCE.

Over ten years after George Pearce ratted, this cartoon, which appeared when he received a knighthood, illustrated the contempt with which Pearce was still held in labour circles. (Australian Worker, 18 May 1927; National Library of Australia)

club-room and Mr. Hughes and the others filed in and took their seats. The Prime Minister rose and said, 'Well, here we are.' As one man all in the room rose to their feet and cheered and cheered again.

hundreds of thousands of working men from Australia only to be replaced by an influx of cheap overseas labour. Debate raged over different views of Australia's future—whether the country would be bound within the British Empire or would find its own identity. The labour movement was not moved by Hughes' increasingly shrill and desperate rhetoric. The referendum went down—narrowly but decisively, although it attained majorities in three states (Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania).⁵ The Party had torn itself apart. Some party members faced possible criminal prosecution for their opposition to conscription—or thought they did. Hughes' vehemence as the campaign progressed and his hostility to any dissidents within the Party made reconciliation virtually impossible.



*'THE ALLEGED "GREAT MAN" ACCEPTS THE VERDICT OF THE PEOPLE!'. The **Australian Worker** was scathing of Billy Hughes' blatant disregard for the 'NO' majority in the first conscription referendum and his treachery to Labor's cause. (Claude Marquet, **Australian Worker**, 16 November 1916; National Library of Australia)*

conscription referendum, a special Caucus meeting began debating a motion of no confidence in Hughes. This day was to be a defining moment in Labor's history. During the lunch break, Hughes conferred with two of his closest supporters, Defence Minister George Pearce and Senate President Tom Givens (Qld), to decide tactics for the resumption of the meeting.⁶ In anticipation of a split, Pearce acquired the key to the Senate club-room so the defectors had somewhere to assemble after a walkout.

The break occurred shortly after the meeting resumed. Hughes' version of events was reported in the pro-conscriptionist *Argus*:

After some discussion . . . I stated that, owing to the fact that members were acting under instructions from outside organisations, and were impervious to all argument, while expressing regret at severing life-long connection with those members who were opposed to me, there was no course left open for me but to withdraw from the chair, and request those who supported me to follow me from the room.⁷

Twenty-three members of the 64-strong Caucus accepted Hughes' offer, including the majority of the Ministry; Hugh Mahon (External Affairs) and King O'Malley (Home Affairs) were the only ministers who remained loyal to Labor.

Hughes was wilful in pursuit of his beliefs. He could not carry the Party with him, so he abandoned it and took with him all the supporters he could muster. The split was irrevocable. With the support of the anti-Labor parties, Hughes formed a new government—described in the *Australian Worker* as 'a hideous prostitution of representative government' reconstructed from 'the most uncompromising conscriptionists he could find in his rag-tag-and-bobtail "Labor" following'.⁸ Caucus loyalists were deceived by their success in the anti-conscription referendum campaign, and had no realisation that a thumping awaited them at the 1917 election. Hughes continued as Nationalist Prime Minister for another six years. Labor remained in Opposition for thirteen years.

Underlying the defection of Hughes and his supporters was their unwillingness to accept the binding force of Caucus. The Pledge and obedience to majority Caucus decisions were abandoned by him and his supporters as fatally flawed. Hughes had ceased to accept that the Party could bind him in any way. Thus Labor's most effective and articulate public defender of Caucus solidarity became a strident critic. Conscription also brought to a head the question of how Labor was to govern itself. After 1916, there was no doubt about the power of the extra-parliamentary Party to determine the policy direction of Caucus. While Hughes had repudiated his commitment to Labor unity and obedience to Caucus decisions and Party processes, the vast majority of the Party membership remained firmly in support of Labor's basic principle of organisation.

Over the ensuing twelve years, Labor lost five consecutive Federal elections—1917, 1919, 1922, 1925 and 1928. In 1929, Jim Scullin led Labor to a resounding victory over the conservative Bruce–Page government that had tried to scrap the federal arbitration system. In a Caucus of 54,⁹ only eleven were survivors of the 1916 conscription split.¹⁰ But 1929 was not a good year to win government. Two weeks after the election, the stock exchange on Wall Street collapsed and the Great Depression began. Despite the morale-boosting election victory, Labor soon learnt the extent of the economic disaster it had inherited. Worse, because no separate Senate election was held in 1929, the new Scullin Government had to contend with a hostile Nationalist Senate in which Labor held only 7 of 36 seats.¹¹

Pressure on the exchange rate increased as commodity prices fell. The previous government had borrowed heavily. Securing further loans was very difficult as concern grew in the money market of the day—London—about the capacity of the Australian Government to meet interest payments. To add to the woes, in Australia the Chairman of the Commonwealth Bank Board, Sir Robert Gibson, insisted Scullin either reduce spending or the Bank would refuse his government finance. Desperate for financial credibility, the Prime Minister invited Sir Otto Niemeyer from the Bank of England to report on Australia's financial plight.¹²

Niemeyer laid down a harsh economic prescription, the infamous 'Melbourne Agreement', which instructed governments to cut public works, pensions and wages.¹³ Scullin and the premiers accepted the plan, which outraged the labour movement. The New South Wales ALP Executive, dominated by the once and future Labor Premier, Jack Lang, opposed the 'Melbourne Agreement' and instructed Labor's New South Wales federal parliamentarians to do the same.¹⁴ Caucus discontent was growing. Scullin was out of his depth. He felt compelled to attend the Imperial Conference in London during the latter months of 1930, in order to reassure British financiers that the Australian economy was sound and Australia would not default on interest repayments. The Caucus he left behind was fragmenting over economic policy.

In Scullin's absence, both Jim Fenton, the Acting Prime Minister, and Joe Lyons, the Acting Treasurer, supported Niemeyer's orthodox economics. E. G. 'Ted' Theodore—a former Queensland premier who had been forced to stand down as Scullin's Treasurer over a state political scandal¹⁵—became a vocal opponent of Fenton and Lyons. From the backbench, Theodore proposed

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Jim Scullin (left) and Ted Theodore (right) stand stiffly on the steps of Parliament House. Scullin's decision to reinstate Theodore as Treasurer in January 1931 precipitated the defection of Joe Lyons and later the 'Langites'. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives)

an expansionary plan, including a £20 million public works program. Although Caucus endorsed the plan, it was opposed as inflationary by Fenton, Lyons and, of course, Gibson. On his return from England, Scullin reappointed Theodore as Treasurer before the scandal in Queensland had been resolved. Fenton and Lyons felt betrayed and resigned from Cabinet. Another Caucus member, Moses Gabb, resigned from the Party.¹⁶

In a terminally divided Caucus, Scullin was under attack from all sides. Lang—whose enmity with Theodore was long-standing—thwarted Theodore's economic strategy by introducing his own plan, which proposed default on interest repayments to British bond-holders. At the Caucus meeting of 18 February 1931, Scullin and Theodore argued strenuously against the Lang Plan, and the Federal Executive subsequently condemned it.

When a by-election was held in East Sydney on 7 March 1931, the Labor candidate, Eddie Ward, campaigned for the Lang Plan. The New South Wales Executive directed its federal parliamentary members to support the Plan.¹⁷ Ward was elected, but Scullin ruled him ineligible to participate in Caucus because he had not abided by the Federal Executive's condemnation of the Lang Plan. The Caucus Minutes of 12 March 1931 record the drama of the Langites' response to Scullin:

Mr. Beasley objected to the Prime Minister's ruling and refused to accept the ruling of the Federal Executive. He maintained that if Mr. Ward was to be excluded from Caucus meetings, other N.S.W. members who supported Mr. Ward's candidature must be similarly dealt with . . .

The motion of dissent from the Prime Minister's ruling was put and his ruling sustained by 34 votes to 3. In view of several statements being made during the course of debate that Mr. Ward was prepared to abide by majority decision of Caucus, the Prime Minister asked Mr. Ward whether he was prepared to do so; but no reply was forthcoming from the Member for East Sydney.¹⁸

A BEDLAM AND ALMOST A RIOT

Warren Denning was a leading journalist in the Canberra Press Gallery when the Scullin government was in office. His beautifully crafted account, *Caucus Crisis: The Rise and Fall of the Scullin Government* (1937), captures the mood of a government in terminal decline and a Caucus torn apart.

Party meetings became scenes of bitter recrimination, with factions attacking the Ministry with the abandon of desperation, and attacking each other with equal ferocity; Ministers impotent and helpless, or rising in fury to hurl insults in the teeth of their accusers. For the twelve months, from about April of 1930 to March of 1931, when the Ministry and party had split finally into its several distinct groups occupying separate rooms, and the United Australia Party and the N.S.W. Federal Labor Party had come into existence, party meetings were a bedlam, and sometimes almost a riot.

It was no uncommon spectacle to see Mr Scullin walk out of party meetings profoundly distressed. So terrific became the tumult at times that all Parliament House was aware of it,

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The Government Party Room, Old Parliament House, 1927. Looking remarkably tranquil in the absence of the troops, it became the scene of bitter recriminations and internecine warfare during Scullin's Prime Ministership. (Mildenhall Collection, National Archives)

although there were double and padded doors separating the party room from the lobbies. While Ministerial sentries patrolled the passages to keep prying ears from encroaching too closely, Opposition members passed with sly and cheerful smiles, and such pert observations as 'I see the party is unanimous again'.

So in March 1931 the Caucus again split, with two breakaway groups—on the one hand the Langites, and on the other Lyons and his supporters who chose a no confidence motion in the House of Representatives to show their hand and join the conservatives.¹⁹ Defending their defection, both Lyons and Gabb referred to the Pledge. For Gabb, breaking the Pledge was preferable to supporting a Cabinet which, by the inclusion of Theodore, had 'lowered the prestige and dignity of responsible government'.²⁰ Lyons tied his adherence to financial policy, stating that the 'policy on which we were elected has been turned completely over, and because some of us will not somersault with it we are said to have broken our pledges'.²¹ By May, Lyons was United Australia Party (UAP) Leader, and the Lang Labor group held the balance of power in the House of Representatives.

On 25 November 1931, Lang Labor launched a parliamentary attack on Theodore, whom they accused of pork-barrelling and impropriety. The Langites, with the support of Lyons and the UAP, brought down the Scullin Government. In the election that followed, the government was slaughtered. Labor, which held 47 seats in 1929, was reduced (in the 1931 election) to just 15 seats in



*‘LABOR: “THIS HAS BEEN MY BLACKEST PAGE. ONLY TIME CAN ERASE THIS BLOT.”’. In 1931 Labor split and lost government for the second time in fifteen years. It would be another decade before Labor was returned to office. (Will Donald, **Australian Worker**, 30 December 1931; National Library of Australia)*

the 76-seat House of Representatives. Two successive Labor governments had now been shattered by internal splits.

The split of 1931 and the challenge by Lang and the New South Wales Executive were to dominate the Party for a decade. The danger posed to federal Labor was expressed by the Federal President, J. J. Kenneally, who described the New South Wales group as ‘a self-seeking coterie . . . who by causing disruption within the Movement are the most effective weapon in the hands of Labor’s historic enemies’.²² Yet the appeal of Lang and ‘Langism’ in New South Wales was understandable. In a period of immense economic stress, when the families of working people were suffering from the consequences of years of economic hardship, the demagogy of Lang gave hope and comfort. For Labor sympathisers, it was compelling. In the 1934 election, federal Labor was reduced to just one New South Wales seat, Newcastle, as support swung to the Langites. Ben Chifley, a future Prime Minister, was out of Parliament from 1931 to 1940. The unions, the Party membership, the State Executive and the State Parliamentary Party remained loyal to Lang until the late 1930s.

When John Curtin succeeded Scullin as Leader, he recognised that Party unity was paramount. If Labor was to regain government, there was no alternative but to deal for peace with Lang and New South Wales. Curtin also took the lead in building the authority of the federal Party. In 1937, he successfully moved at the Federal Executive to deny a state branch the power to direct its federal Caucus members on a federal issue. Curtin would benefit personally from this change when he argued the case for conscription in 1942.

Curtin’s approach to conscription in 1942 stood in stark contrast to that of Hughes in 1916. Curtin’s case was based not on devotion to Empire but on Australia’s own pressing defence needs—an easier case to argue when the

Japanese were approaching Port Moresby. Curtin believed it was untenable to have American conscripts defend Australia when Australia relied on volunteers alone. To appease Party dissidents, he devised a proposal that restricted the use of conscripts to limited areas of the South-West Pacific where the nation faced a direct threat. Curtin convinced a majority of Labor's state branches to support him, and a subsequent Federal Conference vote reflected their decisions. With the Party decision-making processes finalised, Curtin steered his proposal through Caucus and then Parliament. But Curtin was not immune from Caucus criticism during World War II. The attacks against him were sometimes very bitter and, on one occasion, he threatened resignation. But at no stage did a split seem likely. Curtin's extensive Party experience had equipped him with the skills to manage conflict and keep the Caucus intact. Perhaps also Caucus dissidents had learnt some lessons from the past.

The third of the splits to devastate Labor occurred neither in a period of military conflict nor economic crisis, but in the relative boom conditions following World War II. Having guided Australia through the war and its immediate post-war reconstruction phase, Labor was defeated in 1949. Australian politics then came to be dominated by the escalating Cold War. The new Liberal Party Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, was to exploit ruthlessly the increasingly affluent Australian community's fear of communism.

The composition of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party had changed considerably since the 1916 conscription split. According to Robert Murray, the political wing had been predominantly Protestant or secular in the early years of the century. 'Before 1914, less than 25 per cent of Labor Parliamentarians were Catholics; but between the wars the proportion rose to around 50 per cent, and by 1954 it reached a peak of about 60 per cent.'²³ Through the early 1950s, disunity in the party and the Caucus over communism grew, and the Catholic Church began to play a role in the internal Party struggles. The Church's influence within the labour movement came directly from 'The Movement', and less directly through the ALP Industrial Groups (members of which were known as 'Groupers'), formed to fight communist influence in the trade union movement.

In 1950, Menzies attempted to ban the Communist Party. When the High Court ruled his government's *Communist Party Dissolution Act* unconstitutional, he took the issue to a referendum. The 1951 referendum almost succeeded, gaining a majority in three states. Its defeat was due mainly to the magnificent campaign waged by the brilliant but erratic H. V. 'Doc' Evatt, who had become Labor's leader after Ben Chifley's death.

The referendum defeat only incited Grouper sympathisers, particularly from Victoria, to step up the attack on their Caucus colleagues who did not adopt their hard anti-communist line. Successful in containing communist domination of the trade union movement, the Groupers focused on increasing their power base in the Labor Party. But opposition to their influence was growing, including within traditional ALP right-wing circles. The South Australian Branch had disbanded the Groups there, and the Groups failed to gain majority support at the 1953 Federal Conference.²⁴

As the 1954 federal election drew near, Evatt felt increasingly confident of Labor's chances. Then Menzies played the communist card. The conveniently

timed defection of the Russian ‘spy’ Vladimir Petrov erupted in a blaze of publicity on the eve of the campaign. Evatt’s extravagant campaign promises, the legacy of botched redistribution in 1949, along with Menzies’s opportunism, saw Labor narrowly defeated. At the first Caucus meeting after the election, there was an unsuccessful challenge to Evatt’s leadership from Tom Burke, a Grouper sympathiser and father of a later Labor premier. Friction in the Caucus mounted as Menzies further exploited the Petrov defection with the Royal Commission into Espionage. Without reference to Caucus, Evatt acted as legal counsel for his staff who had been implicated before the Commission. Tensions from the Royal Commission exacerbated the growing factional divisions between the Groupers and their opponents, and Caucus meetings degenerated into brawling and vilification.

Notwithstanding a previous alliance, Evatt turned on the Groupers. On 9 September 1954, he described them to Caucus as ‘treacherous liars’ and ‘paid informers’.²⁵ A month later, on 5 October, he released a statement on disloyalty within the Labor Party. The statement accused the Groupers of deliberately undermining ‘a number of Labor’s selected and endorsed candidates, with the inevitable and intended result of assisting the Menzies Government’.²⁶

The reaction was instantaneous and furious, particularly from the Victorian branch. Caucus erupted. There was an attempted leadership spill on 13 October, but Evatt delayed the vote for a week. On 20 October—during probably the most acrimonious meeting in the FPLP’s history—the spill motion was defeated, but only after the turmoil of a division and calls for the names of spill supporters to be recorded. Evatt survived; the unity of Caucus did not.

In early 1955, a new federally installed anti-Group Victorian Executive expelled seven Grouper members of the federal Parliament. The expelled members formed a new party, the Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist), which was the forerunner of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP).²⁷ Following the split, angry exchanges continued in Parliament. In June 1955, during a vote to suspend Eddie Ward, one of the fiercest critics of the Groupers, Ward verbally attacked Stan Keon (Yarra, Vic.), saying, ‘Go on, you rat. You are just a low, yellow cur, that is all you are, you sanctimonious humbug. Get over on your right side, you rat. I don’t want you voting for me. You never were a Labor man.’²⁸ Ward’s statements were reported in the national media despite being expunged from *Hansard* by the Speaker in an effort to prevent further publicity.²⁹

The departure of the defectors did not stifle Caucus criticism of Evatt’s leadership. Distrust and hatred remained among loyal Party members. Evatt eventually resigned from Parliament in 1960, ruined by the split. For Menzies, the split was a gift. He remained Prime Minister until he retired in 1966. The Labor Party was fractured and in disarray. The loss of Catholic supporters proved to be a long-term problem for Labor, especially in Victoria. Not until a new generation of voters emerged under the leadership of Gough Whitlam in the late 1960s and early 1970s did federal Labor regain the electoral middle ground.

Labor’s efforts to accommodate significant political differences within its complex organisational structures have been far more effective over recent decades. By the late 1950s, the bitter experiences of electoral defeat and three

20 OCTOBER 1954—THREE VIEWS

Federal Caucus met on 20 October 1954 to discuss Senator George Cole's motion 'That all elected offices in the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party be declared vacant'. The meeting was dominated by H. V. Evatt's statement of 5 October on the penetration of 'The Movement' in Labor affairs, and has been remembered as the high point of division in the Parliamentary Party. Here we revisit three impressions of the meeting.

Selections from the diary of Clyde Cameron

Joe Fitzgerald opposed the motion and looking Jack Mullens in the face, taunted: 'I say quite deliberately that if it wasn't for some of the traitors inside this Party, Dr Evatt would have won the election. As it was he got more than 50 per cent of the vote and, but for the distribution of seats, would have won Government for us. And to you, Jack Mullens, I say that you are a man who is frustrated and anxious for the limelight. You are never outside the hands of the press whenever you leave this room. You and your mob did everything you could by way of your filthy whispering campaign to brand our Leader as a Communist and unfit for office.'

Jack Mullens: 'This is the first time in the history of this great Australian Labor Party that we have had to witness the sordid spectacle of a Leader setting out to deliberately smear his mates. Dr Evatt has stooped so low as to disregard altogether the machinery set up in the Party to settle internal differences. Your great weakness is that you are devoid of principle, devoid of loyalty, devoid of decency and devoid of concern for what your selfish, self-centred motives might do to the Party that saw fit to elevate you to its leadership.'

Bill Edmonds began by quoting Henry Lawson's *Too Old to Rat*, and

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'Doc' Evatt delivering Labor's 1954 policy speech at Hurstville Town Hall.
(News Limited)

said the Victorian push and their heelers from other States reminded him of the quotation of Tom Aikens in the Queensland Parliament when he said that 'You'll believe, or burn!'

'It doesn't matter who you get as Leader,' he said, 'if he doesn't get any more loyalty than your mob gave Dr Evatt, he would suffer the same fate as Dr Evatt has suffered.' . . . He concluded with the challenge: 'If Dr Evatt is such a weak Leader, can you tell me why the Tories want to get rid of him?'

Clyde Cameron's assessment:

The motion was defeated by 52 votes to 28. And thus ended the most sensational meeting I've ever attended.

. . . it was a clear manifestation of the resentment against outside interference in the internal affairs of the ALP. Evatt's appearance before the Petrov Commission without first discussing the matter with Caucus was seen as an act of contempt, and many

of those who voted for him today would have voted against him involving the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party in the hearing. So, it was not a vote *for* Evatt. It was a clear vote *against* the Groupers.

Selections from Fred Daly's *From Curtin to Kerr* (1977)

On the 20 October meeting:

It was a bitter debate. Feelings ran high and the attacks of Keon, Mullens and Bourke on Evatt were vitriolic and devastating. Insults, interjections and abuse filled the air . . .

The motion was clearly defeated on the voices, but that did not suit Evatt and Ward—they were going for the kill. I will never forget the scene when Eddie Ward, a real hater, called for a division. To everyone's amazement Evatt leaped onto the table, pencil and paper in hand, red-faced and excited, and triumphantly called out, 'Get their names, get their names!' It was Evatt and Ward at their hating best . . .

Evatt's action infuriated Senator John Armstrong who was voting against the motion and he said, 'If that's what

you intend to do, I'll vote for the motion, put my name down too'. They were my sentiments as well and Stewart, Luchetti and myself crossed over in rebellion against the worst action I have ever seen from a Labor leader.

Selections from the Diary of Gil Duthie

On the vote of 52 to 28:

At first 6 of the 28 were on Doc's side but as soon as someone called out 'take down their names'—these hurried back to the other side of the room. Doc had to get on a table to be seen and heard as we were all standing. First time Caucus divided 'up the middle'. Terrible scene . . . 15 speakers in 4 hours. Ended in uproar. I went out very sad at heart to think such a cleavage, such behaviour, such bitterness existed. It was unprecedented.

Press wrote the Caucus up and even named the men who voted agst. Doc (for that's what it amounted to) and I don't agree their names should be published. In Caucus Doc. asked names *NOT* be written down and they were not.

major Caucus splits were changing Caucus and Party culture. The force of the slogan, 'United we stand, divided we fall', had become manifest. The formation of the DLP and its relentless pursuit of electoral revenge upon Labor reinforced the view that it was better to contain political enemies *inside* the Party.

Gough Whitlam's drive to modernise and professionalise Labor's operations at both the parliamentary and organisational level was crucial in Labor overcoming its proven tendency to split. What was to become known as the 'Thirty-six faceless men' fiasco in 1963 powerfully underscored the irrelevance of the Caucus leadership in Labor's policy-making processes. Federal Labor's Leader and Deputy Leader were photographed outside the Party's Federal Conference while 36 delegates, largely unknown in the electorate, met in secret to determine defence and foreign policy. The press had a field day with these images. Reform was essential if Labor was to achieve electoral acceptance.

In 1967, Federal Conference under Whitlam's drive reformed itself by including as delegates by right the four Federal Parliamentary Party leaders, six state leaders and a delegate from the Northern Territory. The Federal Executive was also expanded to include the four federal leaders and a Northern Territory representative. These compromise changes—Whitlam and his allies had sought more sweeping reforms—were more than symbolically important. Apart from

breaking a rigid federal system where decision-making could easily be deadlocked with three states opposing the other three, the interests of the Caucus were now directly represented by its elected leadership in both houses.

By the 1980s, the Federal Executive (now re-badged as the National Executive) was dominated by politicians, highly professional national secretaries and union allies who had forged close political and industrial alliances with state-based factions. Formalised factions bridged the long-standing divide between union officials and the political process. The antagonism between the industrial and political wings eased. While some tension remained, it was to prove more creative than destructive for Labor.

With the emergence of a more presidential style of politics in Australia, the role of the Leader and the Leader's relationship with the National Executive and National Conference changed markedly. Labor was aware of the consequences of the Leader failing to command majority support in the Party's most important national forums. Factional discipline at times became crucial in delivering Party endorsement of policies and decisions determined elsewhere—most often in Cabinet.

Another development was the willingness of the Federal Executive and its successor, the National Executive, to intervene in Party conflict. The 1970 interventions in the New South Wales and Victorian branches were a triumph of Whitlamism—the belief that the Labor Party existed in order to win power and that its policies and leadership should maximise the chance of electoral success. While Victoria resisted intervention, New South Wales succumbed to the inevitable. The New South Wales branch leadership survived. In Victoria, where Gordon Scholes' Corio by-election victory in 1967 and Moss Cass' 1969 victory in Maribyrnong were Labor's only federal gains since 1955, intervention ultimately led to a far more electorally competitive branch.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the National Executive was prepared to intervene in state branches that failed electorally and politically. In 1982, under the leadership of Bill Hayden, it intervened in the Queensland branch, which not only lacked internal democracy but had stubbornly blocked any proposals for reform. The 1992 intervention into the Tasmanian branch followed Labor's 28 per cent vote in the previous state election. The administration and political management of the Tasmanian branch had simply collapsed.

The formalisation of the factions in the Caucus after Labor regained power in 1983, together with their close alignment with the Party machine, created a very effective management tool for handling Party and Caucus conflict. By the mid-1990s, power-sharing in the Caucus had evolved to the extent that elected positions in the FLP broadly reflected internal factional balance. A spread of factional allegiances became a significant consideration when filling leadership positions. In modern Labor, serious tensions have developed *within* factions, alongside the more traditional battleground *between* the factions. The inter-factional struggles over representation which characterised the Caucus in the 1970s and 1980s later played out just as savagely in intra-factional power plays.

For all this, paradoxically, the factional system has been successful in either containing areas of dispute or in minimising differences threatening the unity of Caucus. Effective self-management—be it conflict resolution, or limitation,

or compromise—became a characteristic of Caucus. Personal friendships across factional lines became common—something inconceivable in the 1950s and 1960s. Years of exercising power, more tolerance of differing views, and a growing understanding of the complexities of modern society had eroded artificial ideological barriers. For pragmatic reasons the Party even reduced discipline in one major area—that of moral issues, such as abortion and euthanasia—to allow a conscience vote in Parliament for Caucus members. This acknowledged the wide disparity of views and strength of feeling in the Party on such matters.

Caucus structures and processes promote collective views and contain individual beliefs. But containment becomes difficult, if not impossible, if members believe the Party is betraying their most cherished ideals. No doubt, a genuine ideological commitment impelled many who split from Labor. Many were torn by conflicting loyalties, not least by loyalty to the nation and their perception of the national interest. Coupled with the constraints of strict Party discipline and the Pledge, these commitments proved an explosive mix.

For the splitters, there was no quiet or dignified retreat. Compromise was not possible. The splitters believed their position to be more important than the Party's survival. Lack of Caucus support governed their behaviour. Had Hughes, the conscriptionists, Lyons, the Langites or the Groupers found themselves in a majority, they would surely have used Caucus discipline to their own advantage. Their problem was not Caucus control, but Caucus numbers. For those who remained loyal to the Party, long years in the wilderness of Opposition followed. Labor paid a heavy price electorally following each split. The Party forfeited solid supporters, some of them forever.

In 1916, the point of departure was commitment to Empire; in 1931, it was commitment to economic orthodoxy; and in 1954, it was commitment to inflexible anti-communism. With the exception of the Langites, the Party splitters went to the right. Two contemporary writers, Bob Connell and Terry Irving, have said that: 'All of these splits in fact occurred over issues where bourgeois ideology had some grip within the movement, though not a complete one: parliamentary custom, nationalism, and the sanctity of property.'³⁰ The Langite split was different, and the Langites' rift with Labor was not irreconcilable. In fact, they were later readmitted to the Party, and the most prominent Langites in the federal Parliament—Jack Beasley, Bert Lazzarini and Eddie Ward—all went on to serve as ministers in the Curtin and Chifley Governments. Some will argue that Labor did not split after the mid-1950s because it no longer had the same attachment to principle. In fact, Labor learnt the lessons of the past. The consequences of terminal division were embedded in the Labor psyche.³¹

Labor's unique system of internal democracy, with its foundation in the Pledge and principles of Caucus solidarity, supported by a complex network of mechanisms that have evolved over more than a century of Labor practice, secured the unity and effective operation of Caucus. Labor developed mechanisms to cope with conflict. Each of Labor's splits clarified power relationships and ultimate authority in the Party, forcing new approaches to managing differences within Caucus. The Party organisation was to prevail over Caucus;

federal authority was to prevail over the states. The splits provided hard lessons about the need for tolerance and respect for opposing views.

Labor's very survival was an extraordinary achievement. So too the survival of the principle of Caucus solidarity. The role and powers of Caucus, for so long a political issue exploited by Labor's opponents during the twentieth century, only rarely rated a mention by the end of the century. Since the three great splits, Caucus authority has endured, strengthened and prevailed.

WOMEN IN CAUCUS

Marian Simms

When Dorothy Tangney, formerly a teacher, was elected to the Senate in 1943 a majority of all women elected to Australian Parliaments had family political connections; not Dorothy. Nearly all of the women elected to Australian Parliaments before 1950 were from the non-Labor parties. They also tended to be over 40, with grown-up families. They were less likely to challenge contemporary sex roles. In the same period, male politicians also tended to enter politics in middle age, in keeping with the contemporary expectation that politicians should have proved themselves in some prior calling and be able to draw on the wisdom of maturity.

Tangney did not conform to this pattern. She was comparatively young (just 32), unmarried and without family links to politics. There were sharp contrasts with Enid Lyons, the first woman member of the federal Parliament, who was elected to the House of Representatives in 1943 as the widow of former Prime Minister Joe Lyons and the mother of their large family.¹ Doris Blackburn, the next woman to be elected to the House, as an independent labour representative in 1946, was the widow of Maurice Blackburn. He had twice been expelled from the ALP.

Tangney was less concerned than Lyons with women and family issues. Lyons' speeches were full of references to the distinctive strengths of women, and she primarily saw herself as representing women. Tangney, in her inaugural speech, paid tribute to women munitions workers, but also presented herself as a 'citizen' first and a woman second.² Yet two years later she was very disappointed at missing out on the Australian delegation to the inaugural United Nations conference of 1945 when the prominent feminist Jessie Street was given

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First elected as a Senator for Western Australia in 1943, Dorothy Tangney was the lone female voice in Caucus for the next 25 years. (National Library of Australia)

the honour of being the sole Australian woman member. The appointment had caused controversy in both the Parliament and Caucus. The non-Labor parties suggested that either of the two women MPs, their own Lyons or even Tangney, would have been better. One of Tangney's few contributions to the record of Caucus discussions was a veiled attack on Street, who was defended in the party room by H. V. Evatt and A. A. Calwell.³ Street's biographer claims there were personal jealousies at work, but the ideological differences between the two women were sharp.⁴ Street's membership of several possible communist 'front' organisations would have disconcerted the more moderate Tangney. Women's groups, which had been relatively united during the war, had begun to divide with the onset of the Cold War. Tangney actively supported the work of Labor women's groups and was a stalwart of the Western Australian Labor Women's Organising Committee. She was critical of attempts to mobilise women through cross-party efforts, notably by the Australian Women's Charter movement. Headed by Street, this drew over 200 women to its first conference in 1943. The second conference, held in 1946, was less successful, partly because several women's groups that opposed Street's pro-Soviet sympathies severed their links with the Charter.

By the early 1960s, Senator Tangney remained the sole woman in federal Caucus in a nation where there were just fifteen women in all seven Parliaments. The circumstances were patently inhospitable to women performing public political roles. Contemporary masculine wisdom still insisted that 'a woman's place was in the home'. It was commonly stated that women were not interested in political careers.

Despite its real progressive credentials, the ALP lagged behind the Liberal Party. At the time of her retirement in 1968, Tangney was still the sole Labor woman in the federal Parliament. By then the Liberals had five women senators, one of whom—Annabelle Rankin—had reached Cabinet rank in 1966. In 1949 Enid Lyons had been the first Australian woman to achieve that distinction, in Menzies' first Liberal–Country Party Government.

It is important to remember that Tangney's original election had been unexpected. Originally she was placed in the unwinnable fourth position on the Labor ticket, when only three normal periodical vacancies were due to be filled. She was elected when an additional casual vacancy occurred, allowing four Labor Senate candidates to be returned.⁵ As a testament to her popularity she was subsequently placed at the top of the ALP ticket. In fact, over one-third of Labor women ever elected to the Senate came in through casual vacancies.

Labor women have tended to enter the House of Representatives in cohorts. Key cohorts have come in 1983, 1993 and 1998. Small, mainly Senate cohorts were elected in 1974, and in 1996. In 1974 Joan Child (Henty, Vic.) became the first Labor woman elected to the House of Representatives. She was to be one of the few ALP women who lacked university qualifications and she had worked at a variety of unskilled jobs before entering politics. Child had previously stood as a candidate in 1972, when she narrowly missed election by 308 votes. She had also worked as secretary to three Labor parliamentarians. As such, she was among the first of the 'professional' women politicians—defined here as having paid employment for a parliamentarian, the Party or a trade union, for at least three years prior to election. In 1986 Child became the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives, and followed Labor tradition by refusing to wear ceremonial dress.

Jean Melzer (Vic.) was elected to the Senate in 1974. She had previously been the State Secretary of the Victorian branch of the ALP. Melzer was another early female professional politician, and one of a handful of Labor women ever to have held the powerful position of State Secretary. As we shall see below, the major wave of women members with such backgrounds as political professionals did not occur until the second half of the 1990s.

Signs of further change came in 1975 with the election of Susan Ryan to the Senate for the Australian Capital Territory. Like many who were to follow in the 1980s, Ryan had previously been a feminist activist. She was relatively young and a divorced mother of two. Her marital status and motherhood challenged conventional gender roles. She introduced a private member's Bill on sex discrimination in 1981 and lobbied Bill Hayden to set up a National Status of Women Committee.

Ryan's election was both indicative and representative of far-reaching social changes occurring in the 1970s.⁶ The movement of women into higher education and employment had begun in earnest by the late 1960s. Prompted largely by labour shortages, the Coalition Government had lifted restrictions on the permanent employment of married women in the Commonwealth Public Service in 1966. Annoyed by the continued existence of other restrictions on their equality, female activists set up a plethora of organisations. One, the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), would be particularly important for ALP politics as a training ground for aspirant women. Formed in 1972, it reinvented a traditional women's movement tactic of surveying political candidates on women's issues and then publishing the rankings—Gough Whitlam was one of the candidates to gain a near perfect score in 1972. WEL was officially a non-Party organisation, but except in Victoria, had difficulty attracting non-Labor women.⁷

It was not until the 1980s that there was a significant increase in the

WEL'S 1972 SCORECARD

	<i>Planned parenthood</i>	<i>Child care</i>	<i>Equity in work and education</i>	<i>Awareness & cooperation</i>	<i>Total</i>
Gough Whitlam	8	9	8	8	33
Lance Barnard	3	7	5	7	22
Kim Beazley Snr	-3	7	7	7	18
Jim Cairns	9	8	10	8	35
Clyde Cameron	9	8	8	7	32
Frank Crean	5	6	8	8	27
Bill Hayden	10	9	9	8	36
Lionel Murphy	8	8	9	5	30
Rex Patterson	2	7	5	9	23
Frank Stewart	-1	1	2	7	9
Tom Uren	10	9	9	9	37
Don Willesee	-1	0	5	2	6

The inspiration for the creation of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) was a survey published in early 1972 in the American feminist magazine, *Ms.* This survey of US presidential candidates' responses to issues being raised by the emerging Women's Liberation Movement inspired similar action in Australia. WEL sought to increase community understanding of women's issues without resorting to the more radical attitudes and tactics being adopted by some elements of Women's Lib. According to historian Marilyn Lake, 'it was the very disorder and anxiety provoked by Women's Liberation that created the space for WEL to flourish'.

WEL's survey of candidates in the 1972 federal election was directed to four issues: planned parenthood; child care; equity in work and education; and awareness and cooperation. The campaign had three aims: to inform voters on candidates' attitudes; to educate candidates on women's issues; and to produce a firm commitment from candidates on the action they would take if elected. Women volunteers attended training sessions before being sent out in pairs to conduct the survey in an interview-style format. Responses were mixed. For example, in Victoria the DLP ran candidates in

all 34 electorates, but 26 either did not respond or refused to participate, including the hopeful in Wimmera who refused on advice from his wife.

Each section of the survey had a potential score between -10 and +10. Scores for the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet were published in the *Age*. Scores for the Liberal/Country Party Cabinet members were lower than those for their Labor counterparts, a result that WEL attributed to the disadvantages of being in power. Prime Minister McMahon scored 1, Treasurer Billy Snedden scored -3, while Deputy Prime Minister and Country Party Leader Doug Anthony answered only two questions, making it impossible to produce a score. The Coalition's highest scorer was Andrew Peacock, who scored evenly across the four categories to emerge with a total of 30. Malcolm Fraser finished a long way back in second place with a score of 15.

The majority of the ALP Shadow Cabinet rated well, although Fred Daly was rendered 'unrateable' because he did not answer the questions as they were put to him and Charlie Jones refused to participate.

Christine Cannon

numbers of Labor women. Many of these women MPs still encountered difficulties.⁸ There was much discussion of the 'very organised men, who won't give up roles of power' within the Labor Party.⁹ Outside the Party, the media were viewed as a 'double-edged sword' that accorded women prominence but also subjected them to close scrutiny.¹⁰ Several of the new parliamentarians were members of women's organisations, notably WEL, of Labor women's organisations such as the ALP National Status of Women Committee and its state equivalents, and of the state-based Labor Women's Organisations (LWO). Nearly all had white-collar professional backgrounds. All were over 40 when first elected.

The foundations had been laid with the reform of the extra-parliamentary Party structure. After the Party's 'disastrous' federal performance in 1977, feminist activists, spearheaded by Senator Susan Ryan, were able to use the electoral failure to push the case for greater female representation in Party forums and ultimately in the state and Commonwealth Parliaments. In 1979 there were only two women at the biennial National Conference, yet after the implementation of the Affirmative Action resolutions adopted by the Special 1981 Conference, the Conference had become more feminised. One of the perennial issues for women activists on both sides of politics was the claim that women were poor campaigners and that women voters wouldn't vote for women candidates. Ryan's role in generating party research and publicising party and academic research on those topics was crucial.¹¹ She was able to highlight findings that demonstrated that the ALP's 'male' image was a turn-off for women voters. The ALP's new and extensive women's policy document, *The ALP and Women, Towards Equality* (1982), was based on a 1980 paper drafted by Ryan. Its central argument was that women constituted over 60 per cent of welfare recipients and still lacked civil and legal equality with men. Reform could best be achieved by women themselves gaining access to decision-making positions.

These changes introduced feminist principles to the Labor Party: they were designed to increase women's public role, including their political participation, and to foster public policies that would do the same. The 1983 federal election would vindicate the ALP's feminist politics, yet among some ALP candidates there remained a feeling that the successes could easily generate a 'backlash'.

A lot of prejudice, much of it unconscious, still exists among male ALP members against women candidates. Women don't get selected for safe seats—I'm sure the competition for my own place on the ticket would have prevented my winning if there had been a realisation that a double dissolution was possible.¹²

In 1983 the ALP fielded eleven women in winnable electorates—winnable in the sense that they required a swing of less than 6 per cent. Three new women were elected in addition to the three already sitting. Wendy Fatin (Canning, WA), Helen Mayer (Chisholm, Vic.) and Jeannette McHugh (Phillip, NSW) all won seats from the Liberals. McHugh was the first woman from New South Wales to be elected to the Commonwealth Parliament. Joan Child, Ros Kelly and Elaine Darling (Lilley, Qld) all held their marginals. If the national swing had gone against Labor, instead of against the Coalition, then several of the Liberal women preselected for marginals would have been elected instead

A 'BOYS' CLUB'?

Elected to the Senate in 1975, Susan Ryan became Labor's first woman Cabinet Minister. In her autobiography, *Catching the Waves* (1999), she recalled her early experiences in Caucus:

Gough Whitlam was central, an inspirational figure. I came to know and like other Labor Party figures. Kep Enderby, our local member, was an old-fashioned intellectual of the Left with a big heart and huge enthusiasms, including a belief, which he maintains to this day, in Esperanto as the key to world peace. He was the first to suggest that I should consider running for preselection. Clyde Cameron had become something of a favourite uncle to WEL; Doug Everingham and Moss Cass, respectively Whitlam's health and environment ministers, were empathetic with feminists. Mick Young was national secretary of the Party, and there has never been a better one. A rowdy genius, full of energy and smart tactics, he regarded politics as, at the same time, the most serious of undertakings and the fun of Cork. Bill Hayden, intelligent, tense, was sceptical about what we were up to in the women's movement and loved a heated argument. Kim Beazley (Senior) was saintly, noble in word and deed, unfailingly helpful to the young public education lobbyist who haunted his office during the touch-and-go Schools Commission debate in 1973.

These days young feminists ask me what it was like to be a young woman working with these men. They wait for me to say that I was miserable, overwhelmed by the 'Boys' Club' as current jargon describes the parliament. They expect to hear that the men were rude, sexually predatory, that I suffered greatly by embarking on this Joan of Arc activity, in short that I was as out of place as a fish on a bicycle.

The truth is different and better. Labor men were accessible, comradely and, from time to time even encourag-

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Elected in 1975 as a Senator for the Australian Capital Territory, Susan Ryan was the only female representative on the Labor frontbench from 1977 to 1987. (Canberra Times)

ing. I would not claim that in their hearts they all welcomed these new creatures, women who wanted to share political power, but some did; Gough Whitlam, Moss Cass and Jim McClelland, for example. I did not have much to do with Paul Keating in my early years, but he treated me with the good manners of a well-brought-up Catholic boy, a credit to his mother . . .

There is a lot of bad male behaviour in parliament, as elsewhere where power is concentrated, but I wonder whose interest is served by messages that this unattractive aspect should dissuade women from seeking parliamentary careers. Seeking to change these bad behaviours is a proper objective, but best pursued from within. As far as the Labor Party is concerned, factional power play has stymied more women than uproar in the chambers or stoushes in Caucus.

of some of the Labor women. Of the class of 1983, there were no women in safe seats. Three new women were elected to the Senate: Senators Olive Zakharov (Vic.), Margaret Reynolds (Qld) and Rosemary Crowley (SA).

Women had also begun to make inroads into state Parliaments and Ministries. In 1982 Labor won office in Victoria under the leadership of John Cain, and the new Labor members included a large group of women; one of them, Joan Kirner, would become the first woman Premier of Victoria in 1990. In Western Australia, the Burke Labor Government was elected in 1983 with a small minority of women MPs. Their numbers increased when the government was re-elected in 1986. Dr Carmen Lawrence became the first woman Premier in Australia after the resignation of Burke's successor, Peter Dowding, in 1990.

When the FPLP took office after the 1983 election, Caucus elected Susan Ryan as its first woman minister. Her portfolios were Education and Youth Affairs, and she was also Minister assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women. Ryan held these positions until the Cabinet reshuffle of July 1987, when she was relegated to Special Minister for State after the absorption of Education into the 'super' Ministry of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Labor had prepared for government in 1983 with well-laid plans for a smooth transition to power. The travails of the Whitlam Government were seen as providing a host of cautionary lessons. During his period in office there had been a tendency for unhappy ministers who had lost debates in Cabinet to fight the battle anew in the Caucus. Thus in 1983 the Party devised a set of Cabinet committees, which were mirrored by Caucus committees. Women's issues were handled differently. There was no dedicated Cabinet committee. Consequently, the Caucus women's committee was not in a position to mirror its Cabinet equivalent. This difference possibly worked to the advantage of the activists. Whereas other Caucus committees tended to support the Cabinet line, the women's committee had fewer constraints. In her memoirs, Susan Ryan has described the role of the Caucus women's committee as keeping the men 'honest' on women's issues. Caucus women 'shadowed' key ministers' policies as they affected women. According to Susan Ryan, 'Helen Mayer, the member for Chisholm, senators Olive Zakharov (Victoria), Pat Giles (WA), Margaret Reynolds (Qld) and Rose Crowley (SA) were all long-standing participants in the women's movement, and, like me, determined to deliver real improvements'.¹³ Margaret Reynolds has described the formation of the 'Women's Caucus' immediately after the 1983 election:

The Caucus Status of Women Committee was chaired by Pat Giles, who organised regular briefings from various departmental officers to enable members to discuss the manner in which new policy directions would be translated into bureaucratic action.¹⁴

In 1983 all Labor women MPs were members of the Committee. This was not always to be the case, yet its members always tried to recruit cross-factionally in order to ensure the Committee was broadly representative. In the absence of a Cabinet committee for women's issues, Susan Ryan, ably backed by her office, provided much new policy. The core achievement was the *Sex Discrimination Act* of 1984.

Reynolds described the amazement caused by the Labor women MPs' dinner in the parliamentary dining room soon after the 1983 election: 'The tones were teasing, testy and, in several instances, openly hostile to this exclusive women's occasion.'¹⁵ The new women MPs made some inroads into the male culture of the Old Parliament House. The old-style, boys boarding school menu broadened to include a cottage cheese salad and parliamentary sitting hours were reformed, but there was still no provision for child care. In 1983 Ros Kelly—elected in 1980—became the first female member of the Commonwealth Parliament to have a baby while serving as a member. Kelly's achievements have yet to be fully recognised; after all, she was the second Labor woman Cabinet member. On the one hand, she fought with the tough men of Cabinet, who often belittled her achievements. On the other, she was criticised by some for 'playing on her femininity'.¹⁶ In one episode, she had campaigned with 'Mrs Kelly's Cookbook'. Perhaps harshly judged as a careerist because of her membership of the dominant Caucus Right faction in a town where the Left was in the majority, she broke new ground for women in Labor politics.

The advances made by women in the Labor Party during the 1980s did not continue. The number of Labor women in the federal Parliament remained static—at thirteen—from 1983 until 1987 and then fell in 1990 to eleven. By 1990, the Coalition—with ten Liberal and one National woman—had caught up with Labor. There was a curious twist: the majority of Labor women were in the House and the majority of Liberal women were in the Senate. Two features are significant. One was that the Labor experience defied the general rule that women—and other minorities—do better under proportional representation. The other was what the French political scientist, Maurice Duverger, called the party 'contagion' effect.¹⁷ Duverger predicted that in a two-party system, electoral competition would lead to a continual process of borrowing; the parties of the right would tend to borrow from those of the left, which he saw as more innovative.

Research based on anonymous surveys and interviews conducted during this period identified the frustration felt by many Labor (and some Coalition) female parliamentarians.¹⁸ Over 90 per cent agreed that women were under-represented in the Commonwealth Parliament. Labor women tended to blame the existing power structures, especially the preselection processes and the formalised factions. Coalition women tended to blame women themselves for not coming forward. Also senators on the Labor side tended to be more optimistic about the future prospects for women in the Parliament than were their colleagues in the House. This was in spite of the fact that there were fewer Labor women senators after the 1984 election.

After Susan Ryan's resignation at the end of 1987, her responsibility for the Status of Women passed to Senator Margaret Reynolds. There were a number of new policy initiatives: the National Agenda for Women, the National Women's Health Policy and the Non-English-Speaking Women's Committee. The Agenda was the centrepiece of Labor's women's policies and its significance was recognised by several Labor women in their first parliamentary speeches.

The 1987 election saw the Liberals attempt to present themselves as the Australian party for the modern woman, and they were countered by Labor's

highly feminised advertising campaign against taxing baby foods and school clothing under the ‘whingeing Wendy’ slogan.¹⁹ For the first time in Australian politics, women had become central to political and electoral strategies. This owed as much to the electoral calculations of the party ‘number crunchers’ on both sides as it did to feminist politics within the ALP. It remains a moot point, however, as to whether Labor would have appealed so strongly for the women’s vote had it not been for the lobbying of Susan Ryan. As for the Liberals, their pitch to women seems a classic case of Duverger’s ‘contagion’ theory in operation. This in turn meant that the Liberal Party recognised the electoral significance of women. By 1987 the need for federally funded child care was accepted across the political spectrum, except for the extreme right. Consequently, in 1987 and 1990, the Liberal Party attempted to outbid Labor on child care. However, after their adoption of *Fightback!* in 1991, both Coalition parties moved towards a low-tax, low public-spending regime that undercut undertakings of support for government programs for women.

The broader debate over economic rationalism had major implications for women’s policy. There were policy battles over the maintenance of expenditure on child care in the late 1980s and maternity leave in 1990. As Susan Ryan had emphasised, the feminisation of poverty meant that most social security and health expenditure was concentrated on women. Her overall strategy of achieving equality through encouraging the entry of women into the workplace—and supporting them through government expenditure when they were single parents—became unstuck as unemployment increased and the government attempted to restrict or even cut expenditure on these programs.

At the electoral level, by 1990 more Labor women were presenting for preselection, but they were more likely to be competing directly against other women for marginal electorates. Very few women were in safe seats. This was indicative of two related trends. On the one hand, women belonged both by choice and of necessity to the various Party factions, so factional rivalry cut across cooperation among women. On the other, the broad, cross-factional unity evident among Labor women in the early 1980s was breaking down. Consequently, as new women entered Caucus, the tendency was to see others as competitors.²⁰ It was thus more difficult for the Caucus women’s committee to foster unity and policy cohesion.

By 1990 male and female Labor candidates were also becoming more similar in age, education, length of Party membership and degree of involvement in local organisations. Two main differences remained: Labor women were more likely than Labor men (or Liberal women) to have worked in an MP’s office prior to gaining preselection, and they were still more likely than Labor men to be standing in an electorate that would be extremely difficult to win. In 1993 five new Labor women managed to win through, four to the House of Representatives and one to the Senate. All were in marginal seats, and one of them, Sylvia Smith, was elected to what became the most marginal seat in Australia—Bass (Tas.). Given their need to shore up electoral support in order to hang on to their seats, these women had limited opportunity to become heavily involved in policy development. Mary Easson (Lowe, NSW) did build a profile

LABOR WOMEN ON THE FRONTBENCH

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Office</i>
Susan Ryan	29.12.77–19.3.80	<i>Opposition Spokesperson on Communications</i>
	29.12.77–11.3.83	<i>Opposition Spokesperson on Arts & Letters</i>
	1.2.79–11.3.83	<i>Opposition Spokesperson on Women's Affairs</i>
	19.3.80–23.11.80	<i>Opposition Spokesperson on Media</i>
	23.11.80–11.3.83	<i>Opposition Spokesperson on Aboriginal Affairs</i>
	11.3.83–13.12.84	Minister for Education & Youth Affairs
	11.3.83–19.1.88	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women
	13.12.84–24.7.87	Minister for Education
Margaret Reynolds	24.7.87–18.9.87	Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government
	18.9.87–4.4.90	Minister for Local Government
	19.1.88–4.4.90	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women
Ros Kelly	24.7.87–18.9.87	Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Science & Personnel
	18.9.87–6.4.89	Minister for Defence Science & Personnel
	6.4.89–4.4.90	Minister for Telecommunications & Aviation Support
	4.4.90–27.12.91	Minister for the Arts, Sport, Environment, Tourism & Territories
	27.12.91–24.3.93	Minister for the Arts, Sport, Environment & Territories
	24.3.93–1.3.94	Minister for the Environment, Sport & Territories
	23.12.93–1.3.94	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women
Wendy Fatin	4.4.90–27.12.91	Minister for Local Government
	4.4.90–24.3.93	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women
	27.12.91–24.3.93	Minister for the Arts & Territories
Jeanette McHugh	27.5.92–11.3.96	Minister for Consumer Affairs
Janice Crosio	24.3.93–23.12.93	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services
	23.12.93–25.3.94	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Sports & Territories
	25.3.94–11.3.96	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Security
Rosemary Crowley	24.3.93–23.12.93	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women
	24.3.93–11.3.96	Minister for Family Services
Carmen Lawrence	1.3.94–11.3.96	Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women
	25.3.94–11.3.96	Minister for Human Services & Health
	20.3.96–21.4.97	<i>Shadow Minister for the Arts; Shadow Minister for the Environment; Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women</i>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Office</i>
	5.9.00–	<i>Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation and Technology; Shadow Minister for the Status of Women</i>
Mary Crawford	25.3.94–11.3.96	<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Housing & Regional Development</i>
Belinda Neal	20.3.96–27.3.97	<i>Assistant to the Shadow Minister for Health</i>
	20.3.96–3.9.98	<i>Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</i>
	27.3.97–3.9.98	<i>Shadow Minister for Local Government</i>
	22.4.97–26.8.97	<i>Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women</i>
	26.8.97–3.9.98	<i>Shadow Minister for Childcare; Shadow Minister for Housing</i>
Jenny Macklin	20.3.96–20.10.98	<i>Shadow Minister for the Aged</i>
	20.3.96–27.3.97	<i>Shadow Minister for Family & Community Services</i>
	27.3.97–26.8.97	<i>Shadow Minister for Family Services</i>
	27.3.97–20.10.98	<i>Shadow Minister for Social Security</i>
	26.8.97–20.10.98	<i>Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women</i>
	20.10.98–5.9.00	<i>Shadow Minister for Health; Shadow Minister for the Status of Women</i>
	5.9.00–	<i>Shadow Minister for Health</i>
Kate Lundy	26.8.97–20.10.98	<i>Assistant to the Shadow Minister for the Arts; Assistant to the Shadow Minister for Youth Affairs; Assistant to the Shadow Minister for Science & Information Technology; Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Minister for Sport & Tourism</i>
	20.10.98–	<i>Shadow Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs; Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry & Technology on Information Technology</i>
Sue Mackay	26.8.97–20.10.98	<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Minister for Employment & Training</i>
	26.8.97–20.10.98	<i>Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</i>
	20.10.98–	<i>Shadow Minister for Regional Services; Shadow Minister for Territories; Shadow Minister for Local Government</i>
Cheryl Kernot	20.10.98–5.10.99	<i>Shadow Minister for Regional Development; Shadow Minister for Infrastructure; Shadow Minister for Transport; Shadow Minister for Regional Services</i>
	5.10.99–	<i>Shadow Minister for Employment & Training</i>
Jacinta Collins	20.10.98–	<i>Parliamentary Secretary representing the Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations in the Senate; Parliamentary Secretary representing the Shadow Minister for Employment, Training & Population in the Senate</i>

Three female Caucus officers at a meeting in late 1991. Left to right: Elaine Darling (Deputy Chair), Carolyn Jakobsen (Chair) and Mary Crawford (Secretary). (Private collection, John Scott)

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on women and family issues, including strong criticism of China's one-child policy.

In the 1990s there were two highly significant lateral recruits to the Caucus—namely, Carmen Lawrence (1994) and Cheryl Kernot (1998). Carmen Lawrence had been Premier of Western Australia from 1990–93, and was elected in a by-election in March 1994. A high-profile campaigner with a PhD in psychology, she was widely touted as a future prime minister. She was immediately promoted to Cabinet. Her reputation was severely undermined by the subsequent establishment of a Royal Commission into the 'Penny Easton' affair by the Richard Court Government. (Dr Lawrence stood accused of using the Western Australian Parliament to make political mileage about Penny Easton's possible connections with Richard Court, and then lying to the Parliament about her prior knowledge of a colleague's role in bringing the matter before the Western Australian Parliament.) The media coverage was both sensationalist and sexist.²¹ Similarly, when Cheryl Kernot left the Australian Democrats in October 1997 to join the ALP, in a surprise announcement, she was rapidly condemned as a 'witch' by former Democrat colleagues and workers, and lampooned by cartoonists as a political Juliet.²²

In the main, however, after the high point of the National Women's Agenda, the main initiatives for women occurred outside the government and party rooms. The principal efforts of Caucus women, including Senators Giles (WA) and Reynolds, and also leading feminist bureaucrats, advisers and key state figures such as Joan Kirner, the former Victorian Premier, were directed at changing the Party itself. These women successfully pushed for a major rules change at the 1994 National Conference that committed the Party to Affirmative Action for women. Specifically they won agreement for the goal that women should make up 35 per cent of state and federal Labor Members of Parliament by 2002. In the event that these targets were not met, then all of that round of preselections would be 'null and void'. These decisions were negotiated through the factions and the National Executive. Some of the women mentioned above played crucial roles in securing the support of the Prime Minister, Paul Keating. He opened a national Labor Women's Conference in December

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Women delegates react with jubilation to the 1994 National Conference Affirmative Action decision. The Conference committed the Party to the endorsement of female candidates in at least 35 per cent of winnable seats at state and federal level by 2002. (Andrew Taylor, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 September 1994; National Library of Australia)

1993 in Melbourne that was specifically concerned with Affirmative Action reform. A number of states set up their own Affirmative Action Working Parties during this period.

Having achieved success in Hobart in 1994, Labor women organised to monitor the progress of Affirmative Action and to support the expected influx of new women. Largely through the efforts of Joan Kirner, the EMILY's List (Early Money is Like Yeast) National Women's Network was formed in 1996 to support Labor women candidates. Its membership is open to Labor supporters as well as members. At the Party's 1998 National Conference in Hobart, the Party Leader, Kim Beazley, launched the 'official' Labor Women's Network. Why two groups? EMILY's List—like the US model from which it draws—supports reproductive choice. The ALP (and the Coalition) allows a 'conscience vote' on abortion and euthanasia. For an official ALP body to support abortion would be too divisive.

There are striking similarities between the women's reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and those of the mid-1990s. Both involved women's leadership in a networking process that led to formal rule changes and the establishment of new institutions. In both periods, women leaders highlighted to the Labor leadership the importance of women voters. After Susan Ryan's research in the 1970s and early 1980s came Carmen Lawrence's work on 'gender gap' politics and EMILY's List's support for research tailored to women candidates. There are also important differences. Whereas in the earlier period there was a coherent core of agreed 'women's issues', by the latter period the list had become more diffuse. This can be seen by examining the changing concerns

THE CLASS OF '98



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Caucus women pictured in February 1999. Back: Rosemary Crowley, Michelle O'Byrne, Kirsten Livermore, Carmen Lawrence, Nicola Roxon, Janice Crosio, Jill Hall. Middle row: Jacinta Collins, Sue West, Annette Ellis, Kelly Hoare, Margaret Reynolds, Kay Denman, Julia Irwin, Jane Gerick. Front: Brenda Gibbs, Julia Gillard, Jenny Macklin, Cheryl Kernot, Kate Lundy, Anna Burke, Trish Crossin, Tanya Plibersek, Jann McFarlane. (Auspic)

A dozen new Labor women joined the Caucus after the October 1998 election: Anna Burke, Jane Gerick, Julia Gillard, Jill Hall, Kelly Hoare, Julia Irwin, Cheryl Kernot, Kirsten Livermore, Jan McLucas, Michelle O'Byrne, Tanya Plibersek and Nicola Roxon. Three of them recall some early impressions.

Julia Gillard

I remember standing in a village hall in Cymgrach, Wales, a teenager who was about to be introduced to her extended family for the first time, to dozens of relatives I had never known. I remember the mix of excitement and fear. What would they be like? Would we get on? What did the bond between us mean?

The same emotions filled me, the same questions plagued me, entering the Federal Labor Caucus. I know I have a bond with this band of people, but what does the bond mean? The first Caucus meeting and those early parliamentary weeks were

days of exploration, of easy conviviality and of emerging mateship. I was told it would be blokey, and it is, but not to the point of exclusion. Women are no longer an oddity but the culture is the product of a history when we were.

I was told it would be competitive and it is, with old wounds and new rivalries on display. Watching the strange and strained relations between some, usually those who should be close because they are in the same faction in the same state, can be like watching a foreign film without the benefit of subtitles.

But despite all of this, there is the bond. As time passes, I am increasingly aware that it will always be impossible to define but I hope it will always be easy to feel.

Cheryl Kernot

I think the gentlemen's club in the Labor Party is changing quite a lot. The women are very visible, they speak up in Caucus

regularly and they're active on committees. The Caucus women's committee is very strong in numbers. Although I'm a new Member, I feel there's a generational change that's overcome the Labor Party. Some of those young women are making a wonderful, intelligent and lively contribution to the Parliament and the party and they haven't been there a year yet. And one of the really interesting things is there seems to be lots of cross-factional support. At the Press Club there are new Member's nights. You'll find all new Members and some of the older ones from all factions go down to support and listen. There is a very strong sense of the 'Class of '98'. It's very encouraging. (Extract from *Party Girls*, 2000)

Nicola Roxon

The best thing about being elected to Federal Parliament as a woman in October 1998 is that such a large number of women got elected at the same time. I think there

is just not the pressure and focus of being 'one out' that some of my predecessors such as Susan Ryan or Ros Kelly or even Carmen Lawrence experienced.

Having a group of young women all elected at the same time does provide a sense of belonging and support but even more importantly, to me, is that it gives us the liberty in Caucus to be different to each other. I have not felt the burden of being pigeon holed. I look around the women elected in 1998 and see those passionate about agriculture, education, families, others about IT, domestic violence, small business, or IR and law like me, or history . . . the list can go on.

I think that because there is a large number of us, our male colleagues can also see and appreciate the vibrancy and diversity, not expect us to represent one imagined 'women's view' of the world. I believe this is a good foundation for us being able to build on our strengths for the future.

in women's first parliamentary speeches. The 'maiden' speech was traditionally the occasion when a new male Member of Parliament would introduce himself and give notice of his intentions. Now purged of its sexist terminology, the first speech still serves as a major statement of background and interests.

Most of the women elected prior to 1990 mentioned women's issues in their first speeches, whereas most elected after 1990 spoke of general political issues. This is in keeping with the general and bipartisan perception that the major issues facing the nation are economic restructuring and globalisation. In addition, Labor's humiliating defeat in 1996 led to recriminations in which feminists and other 'special interests' were to share the blame. The anti-Labor swing also depleted the ranks of Labor women and swelled the Coalition's.

There were two significant exceptions to this trend. First, two high-profile Labor feminists were elected in this period—Carmen Lawrence (Fremantle, WA) in 1994 and Jenny Macklin (Jagajaga, Vic.) in 1996. Their speeches highlighted women's issues. Carmen Lawrence provided a theoretical analysis of the reasons for women's under-representation in politics. Jenny Macklin noted Australia's 'fine record' on women's rights, but was concerned that it was slipping, especially on the industrial relations front. 'For true democracy,' she declared, 'half of this place should be made up of women.'²³

Second, a number of the more than a dozen new women elected in the pro-Labor swing of 1998 tried to reconcile women's issues with broader social

The Affirmative Action decision raised questions about how the traditionally masculine Caucus faction system would respond to increased female membership. (Alan Moir; **Sydney Morning Herald**, 29 September 1994; National Library of Australia)



questions. In this vein, Nicola Roxon (Gellibrand, Vic.) argued that ‘the economy is a women’s issue’. She also presented this interpretation as part of the contribution being made by her ‘generation of feminists’.²⁴ A small number of the 1998 group also paid tribute to mentors, role models and feminist groups. Three new women thanked EMILY’s List founder, Joan Kirner, in 1998. Another notable feature was the discussion of Indigenous issues. Prior to 1990, Senator Margaret Reynolds was one of the few people to devote a sizeable portion of her speech to the needs of Aboriginal people, specifically calling for full land rights. Of the women entering Parliament after 1998, Trish Crossin (Senator, NT), Tanya Plibersek (Sydney, NSW) and Jan McLucas (Senator, Qld) all discussed Aboriginal people. In 1996 Sue Mackay (Senator, Tas.) had also called for a fairer deal for Indigenous Australians.

Back in 1943, Dorothy Tangney praised the work of Australian women in industry, but in terms that implied they were performing a wartime emergency role, above and beyond the call of duty. She acknowledged their path-breaking achievement, but presented herself as a ‘citizen’ rather than as a woman. Tangney’s successors of the 1970s and 1980s set out a series of issues of concern to women if they were to achieve full equality with men in the public and political arenas. Jean Hearn (Senator, Tas.) emphasised peace in her first speech to the Senate in 1981; Pat Giles workers’ rights in hers in the same year; Carolyn Jakobsen (Cowan, WA) spoke of international obligations and treaties when she first addressed the House of Representatives in 1984; Helen Mayer sought equal representation for women on government bodies in 1983; and Susan Ryan, Wendy Fatin and Rosemary Crowley all drew attention to the under-representation of women in politics. Other themes of women members’ first speeches included the needs of non-English-speaking women, the importance of child care and refuges, and abortion reform.

It has been argued by the proponents of critical mass theory that women need to make up at least a quarter of the membership of a body in order to

have an impact on it. Labor women have only just reached that threshold in the Commonwealth Parliament. Yet we have seen that group activity by a smaller proportion of women did achieve significant change. The passage of the *Sex Discrimination Act* in 1984 altered public expectations and requirements. The internal reforms of the Labor Party reduced male dominance and increased opportunities for women to play a more active role. As the FPLP moves into its second century, new challenges for Labor women lie ahead.

CRITICS OF CAUCUS

Verity Burgmann

It was inevitable that the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party would have critics in abundance, for it was committed to a task that was immense, if not impossible. These critics have served the important function throughout the twentieth century of reminding Labor politicians of the purpose of the Labor Party. According to the Objective formally adopted in 1905, Caucus was committed to: 'The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and the Municipality.'¹ To ensure that the workers' elected representatives carried out this task, those activists in the wider labour movement who founded the Labor Party insisted on the principle of control from below, that the Party as a whole should direct the FPLP.²

In its more extreme formulations, the task of the new Party was to introduce 'Socialism In Our Time'. At the very least, Labor supporters expected their elected representatives to support workers in dispute with employers or the state; assist trade union organisation; educate the public about the exploitation of labour and the misdeeds of capitalists; and, when in government, nationalise basic industries and utilities and two or three of the more notorious monopolies, and pass other laws that would ameliorate the position of working-class people through improved wages, working conditions and welfare provisions.

As an organisation dedicated to the making and unmaking of social conditions, the FPLP has been the source of both abundant hope and bitter disappointment to its supporters. Especially agitated by the gap between promise and reality were the many Labor Party activists in the branches and trade unions

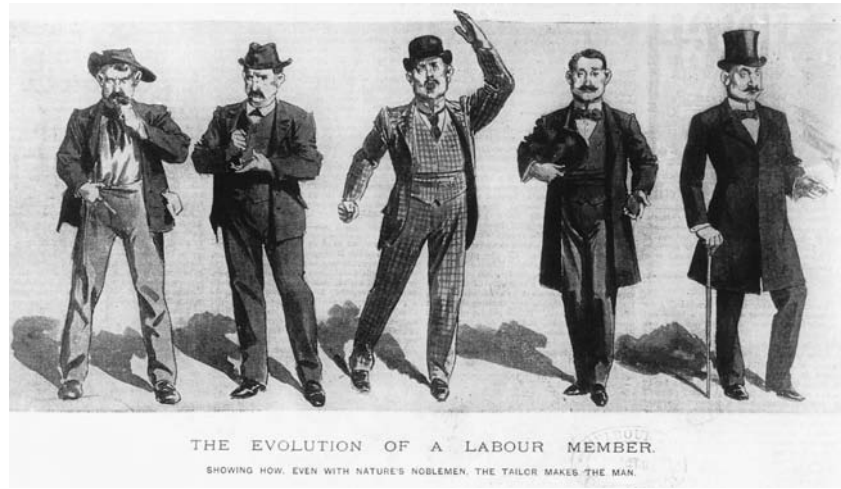
(and the smaller number of politicians) who called themselves socialists and insisted there was indeed a 'parliamentary road to socialism'. These 'internal critics' argued with the 'external critics' of Caucus in organisations further to the left who disputed Labor's ability and willingness to legislate for socialism, and lambasted the Labor politicians whose behaviour confirmed that prognosis. For example, Eddie Ward frequently expressed concern that his fellow Labor politicians did not stand up for working-class interests.³ The notion that Caucus consists of well-paid professional politicians, with an ambivalent commitment to the cause of working-class people, is not a recent theme.

In the first Senate elections of 1901 and again in 1903, the Labor Party was opposed by the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), the electoral arm of the Australian Socialist League. Its members had departed the New South Wales Labor Party in 1898 because it had 'degenerated into a mere vote-catching machine . . . following a policy of compromise and supineness'.⁴ The SLP campaign criticised the ALP (the 'Bogus Labor Party') and its official organ (*The Shirker*) for failure to represent working-class interests. Caucus, the SLP asserted, consisted of opportunists eager to sell out the workers at every conceivable opportunity.⁵ Socialists within the Labor Party were 'Socialists who do not want Socialism'.⁶

Internal critics were there, too, at the start. The Queensland Social-Democratic Vanguard, formed in March 1900 by Ernie Lane, Bob Ross and other Labor supporters, urged its adherents in 1901 to oppose modification of Labor Platforms. 'A decline to mere Liberalism is to be guarded against.'⁷ In Perth in June 1901, a dozen Labor activists enraged by the State Parliamentary Labor Party's opposition to striking railway workers, formed the Social Democratic Federation of Western Australia.⁸ Several members of the Federation were in the first Western Australian Labor Government in 1904; they attacked the government from within the Parliamentary Party, after Premier Henry Daglish's first policy speech referred to the need to retrench and 'mark time'.⁹ The Member for Boulder, John Hopkins, noted 'a serious falling off in the ideals of the Labor Party in office—as compared with the same party in opposition'; he regretted that 'the sweets of office should have proved so alluring and seductive to the new Government as to warrant them pulling down the standard of progress'.¹⁰ The socialist left within the Victorian Labor Party noted sadly in 1903 the tendency of Labor politicians 'to yield very soon to the dissolving influence of quasi-public interests, corporate power and party manipulation'.¹¹

Hardly had the battle been joined and there were fruits of office to entice and corrupt. For the labour movement, at both state and federal levels, parliamentary success was experienced not only remarkably early by world standards but at a stage of relative organisational immaturity. This situation gave the politicians an extra advantage in terms of the balance of forces between themselves and the wider labour movement they supposedly represented.¹² Critics were alert to the dangers therein. Tom Mann, the British trade union leader resident in Australia during this first decade, maintained he had come to Australasia to see whether, in countries with broader franchises, 'a drastic modification of capitalism could be made'. He decided not, and resigned as a Labor Party organiser to found the Victorian Socialist Party, because the emphasis on the role of Labor parliamentarians had encouraged 'slowness' and

'THE EVOLUTION OF A LABOUR MEMBER'. As soon as Labor politicians entered the colonial parliaments, doubts were cast on their ability to remain true to their working-class ideals. (Punch, 18 October 1894; National Library of Australia)



distracted attention away from industrial organisation—a more reliable defence of workers' wages and conditions. He regretted that 'undue importance has been attached to political action' and that 'to listen to the speeches of the typical Labor politician it is clear that he is surfeited with the idea that that which is of paramount importance is the return to the legislative bodies of an additional number of Labor men, and that all else is secondary and relatively trifling'.¹³

The performance of federal Labor in office between 1910 and 1913, and again between 1914 and 1916, increased the tensions between Labor politicians and the workers who elected them. Despite their parliamentary majorities, Labor governments were unable to abolish capitalism or even bad pay and conditions. George Dale, an activist in the Amalgamated Miners' Association at Broken Hill, regretted labour's venture into politics:

Those who for their personal gains exploited our leisure hours and energies in stumping the country in order to return them to well-paid billets have in the hour of our direst needs deserted not only us who breathed political life into their evil-smelling nostrils, but have trampled upon every principle they ever professed, and have acted generally in a manner that would put to shame Judas Iscariot.¹⁴

Disappointment with Labor politicians fed the growing strength in Australia of the Industrial Workers of the World (the 'Wobblies' or IWW), who argued for revolutionary industrial unionism and against parliamentary activity as a solution for working-class problems. Leading Wobbly Tom Barker explained that experiencing Labor politicians made him 'absolutely convinced . . . that a strong and even ruthless working-class body was necessary to see that people were properly protected and properly paid'.¹⁵

The inventive genius of Wobbly argot easily absorbed Australian working-class cultural mores to belittle Labor politicians and their motives. The best known IWW song was 'Bump Me into Parliament' to the tune of 'Yankee Doodle':

Come listen, all kind friends of mine,
 I want to move a motion,
 To build an El Dorado here,
 I've got a bonzer notion.

Chorus:

Bump me into Parliament,
 Bounce me any way,
 Bang me into Parliament,
 On next election day.

Some very wealthy friends I know
 Declare I am most clever,
 While some may talk for an hour or so
 Why, I can talk for ever.

I know the Arbitration Act
 As a sailor knows his 'riggins',
 So if you want a small advance,
 I'll talk to Justice Higgins.

Oh yes I am a Labor man,
 And believe in revolution;
 The quickest way to bring it on
 Is talking constitution.

I've read my Bible ten times through,
 And Jesus justifies me,
 The man who does not vote for me,
 By Christ he crucifies me.¹⁶

Politicians, the IWW insisted, enjoyed too congenial an atmosphere in Parliament to stand up for workers in struggle. The Labor 'Polly' would naturally put his own material interests before those of the working class, 'since economic determinism is such a powerful factor', and his interests were not compatible with the workers' welfare.¹⁷ 'The worst use you can make of a member of your own class is to place him in parliament.'¹⁸ Politicians necessarily became conservative. 'Their very jobs demand it. Their very lives prove it.' Workers were living in a fools' paradise because of 'insidious teaching on the part of those whom the workers themselves have raised to positions of privilege and of others aspiring to such positions'.¹⁹

The precocity of the political labour movement in Australia enabled the IWW to indulge effectively in polemical abuse, based on experience of Labor governments. 'It is pleasing to note that the Labour Parties of Australia, when gaining a majority on the plush cushions in the various Parliaments have displayed absolutely their utter impotence to do anything for the workers.'²⁰ 'Workers of Australia, you have raised up unto yourselves gods, in the shape of Labor politicians, and behold events have proved that their feet are but of clay.'²¹

Why these feet were of clay was the central concern of Vere Gordon Childe's 1923 study, *How Labour Governs*. Although Childe was secretary to New South Wales Labor Premier John Storey from 1919 to 1921, and supported Labor

'THE WOBBLIES'

The Australian Industrial Workers of the World was widely resented by Labor apologists for its 'determination to make workers believe their representatives in Parliament are all unmitigated scoundrels', as J. W. Miller put it in 1916. The Wobblies recruited from disaffected Labor voters with the help of catchy songs such as 'Bump Me into Parliament'. Another IWW song, 'Hey! Polly', to the tune of 'Yankee Doodle', similarly poured scorn on the pretensions of Labor MPs to improve workers' circumstances.

The politician prowls around,
For workers' votes entreating;
He claims to know the slickest way
To give the boss a beating.

Chorus:
Polly, we can't use you, dear,

To lead us into clover;
This fight is ours, and as for you,
Clear out or get run over.

He claims to be the bosses' foe.
On workers' friendship doting,
He says, 'Don't fight while on the job,
But do it all by voting.

Elect ME to the office, boys,
Let all your rage pass o'er you;
Don't bother with your countless
wrongs—
I'll do your fighting for you.' . . .

And all the while he spouts and spiels,
He's musing undetected,
On what a lovely snap he'll have
When once he is elected.

Verity Burgmann

rather than the IWW, he worked closely with trade unionists critical of Labor politicians. Childe analysed the increasing distance of Labor politicians from, and betrayal of, the declared interests of those who habitually voted for them and argued that the labour movement's experiment with 'labour-in-politics' was unlikely to bring the anticipated rewards. For Childe the shortcomings of Caucus stemmed from the fact that these elected representatives of labour were not properly accountable to working-class electors or even to the Labor Party as a whole.

The parliamentary representative of the workers tends to set himself up as a leader and to claim the right to neglect the recommendations of Conference, and even the sacred platform itself in accordance with his interpretation of the interests of the Party which is frequently determined by considerations of personal safety and mere political expediency . . . The fact is that, possessed of a substantial salary, a gold pass on the railways and other privileges, and surrounded with the middle-class atmosphere of Parliament, the workers' representative is liable to get out of touch with the rank and file that put him in the Legislature, and to think more of keeping his seat and scoring political points than of carrying out the ideals he was sent in to give effect to.²²

Childe described a process whereby opportunist politicians came increasingly to control the labour movement, through structural changes in the Labor Party's organisation which ensured that Party bodies ostensibly there to control the politicians were in fact dominated by politicians. The backbenchers were generally more radical than Cabinet ministers, 'surrounded by outwardly obsequious civil Servants, courted by men of wealth and influence', but, as professional politicians, were easily manipulated to support ministers, because

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*By 1923, archaeologist, secretary to NSW Labor Premier Storey and author of **How Labour Governs**, Vere Gordon Childe, was predicting that eventually the labour movement would be disappointed with the 'labour-in-politics' experiment. (Flinders University Library of South Australia)*

they would be unlikely to vote against the government on the floor of the House and risk losing their seats at an election. Only very rarely would a Labor member obey his conscience, if his job were at stake. Frank Anstey, sickened by the government's inactivity and preoccupation with militarism, and finding his criticisms in the Party room falling upon deaf ears, resigned from the Caucus in order to ventilate his indignation publicly. 'In conclusion, we may remark that the Caucus system seems to discourage brilliance and originality . . . A versatile and original thinker like Anstey is too dangerous to receive preferment from Caucus. Safe moderate men are generally preferred.'²³

With the perception by internal and external critics that Caucus was effectively controlled by the ministers, and in turn was in command of the wider Labor Party, some feared that the fundamental ground rule of 'labour-in-politics'—control of the politicians by the labour movement—was being thwarted. Caucus, Childe argued, could not be compelled to do as it ought: 'standing up boldly in defence of the one class which put them in power'. Thus 'the Labour Party, starting with a band of inspired Socialists, degenerated into a vast machine for capturing political power, but did not know how to use that power when attained except for the profit of individuals'.²⁴

While Childe was writing, his fellow critics in the industrial wing were mobilising yet again to make the politicians behave. The 1919 Federal Conference passed motions that called for nationalisation of private banking, insurance, health services, shipping and cold stores. In response to what E. J. Holloway described as 'discontent in the ranks of Labour', it reworded the socialisation clause of the Party Objective to: 'Emancipation of human labour from all forms of exploitation, and the obtaining for all workers the full reward of their industry by the collective ownership and democratic control of the collectively used agencies of production, distribution and exchange.' In 1921 the All-Australian Trade Union Congress recommended that the ALP drop its four-clause 1919 Objective and replace it with the single slogan: 'The socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange.' In supporting this blunt Objective and its attached statement of 'Methods' at the 1921 ALP Conference, future Prime Minister Scullin explained the purpose was 'to introduce socialism instead of nationalisation. Nationalisation is really State Capitalism'. The Socialisation Objective, as it became known, was

passed by 22 votes to 10, an implied but dramatic critique of Caucus. However, the 'Blackburn Declaration', carried 15 votes to 13, tempered the Objective with the observation that the ALP proposed collective ownership only for the purpose of preventing exploitation, that the Party did not seek to abolish private ownership of instruments of production where utilised by the owner in a socially useful manner and without exploitation.²⁵

The Socialisation Objective remained, in effect, as a standing rebuke to Caucus; active left-wing Party members formed 'Socialisation Units' to maintain pressure on the politicians, most notably in New South Wales. From mid-1930, these Units operated as a well-organised ginger group, successfully pressing demands that committed the New South Wales Party to socialism as an immediate objective. However, Premier Lang, while abusing the Scullin federal Labor Government for capitulation to capitalist financiers, effectively outmanoeuvred the Socialisation Units. The Lang Inner Group ensured its control of the 1933 Conference, which voted to disband the Socialisation Units and, while reaffirming the Socialisation Objective, declared that 'socialisation of credit' was the only immediate policy. Many Unit members were expelled, joined the Communist Party or, thoroughly disillusioned, became politically apathetic—while others remained in the Labor Party.²⁶

Federal Conferences continued to press the socialisation principle on the wartime Labor governments, arguing that socialist policies were even more appropriate to the rational direction of human and material resources under conditions of war than in time of peace. In 1945 Conference politely reprimanded Caucus with the motion: 'Conference urges the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party, within the limits of the Constitution, to give effect to the Party's policy of socialisation.'²⁷ Between 1945 and 1949 the Chifley Government's measures for nationalisation and public enterprise, while falling far short of the 1921 Objective, nonetheless pacified many erstwhile critics of Caucus, especially when the High Court's declaration that nationalisation of banking was unconstitutional became the problem rather than lack of will on the part of a Labor government. Similarly, the medical profession's sabotage of the projected universal health care system deflected potential critics anxious for more thoroughgoing attempts to realise the Objective.²⁸

Then came the 1949 coal strike. Critics of Caucus had tended hitherto to emphasise sins of omission. In the case of the 1949 coal strike in support of miners' claims for a 35-hour week, a 30s per week wage increase and long service leave, Labor politicians were castigated for sins of commission: freezing union funds, jailing union leaders and using troops as strike-breaking labour. When Attorney-General Evatt rushed through the National Emergency (Coal Strike) Bill 1949, which prohibited any union from using its own funds to assist strike action or collect funds to sustain members on strike, the Trade Unions Committee, formed by left-wing unions to support the strike, was outraged: 'To protect the profits of the wealthy, coal, steel and shipping monopolists, the Labor Government has stooped to the lowest and most callous crime in the calendar—baby starving!'²⁹ At a time when the Communist Party was already a strong competitor for both working-class and intellectual support, the explosion

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In the midst of the 1949 coal strike, Ben Chifley is confronted by demonstrating western miners when arriving for a Macquarie District Assembly meeting. (Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU)

of the long-standing debate between parliamentary Labor and its critics over the coal strike had the potential to split the entire labour movement.

Labor voters might have resented the Communist Party's encouragement of the miners' strike, but the fund-freezing legislation, under which union leaders were jailed for contempt of court, then its use of troops as strike-breaking labour, left a legacy of bitterness towards Labor politicians on the part of many traditional and loyal supporters. The plan to bring in the Army was strongly endorsed by a joint meeting of the Commonwealth and New South Wales Cabinets on 26 July, but many ALP stalwarts expressed disgust and disillusionment with these Labor politicians and some left the Party.³⁰ The President of the Kurri Kurri branch of the ALP declared: 'Our politicians have deserted us, and we have got to see in future that we elect politicians who will not let us down.'³¹ For the Communist Party, the strike proved that the arbitration system upheld by Labor politicians was 'a vicious bludgeon against the working class'.³² A legacy of the strike was the enduring feeling that Labor had sullied its reputation. For men and women on the coalfields in particular, memories were bitter. An anonymous miner wrote:

In the years to come, when men look back
 From a socialist land of light,
 And talk of the days of the last great slump
 And the miners who led the fight.
 It may well be that their deepest scorn
 Will not be for the bosses' greed
 But for Chifley's hacks, who turned their backs
 On the workers in time of need.³³

The behaviour of Chifley's hacks continued to rankle but there remained too in Labor ranks a feeling that Chifley's governments had nonetheless kept their eyes on 'the light on the hill', because they had at least tried to nationalise banking and socialise health care. With the Constitution and vested interests an apparently impenetrable barrier to realisation of the Objective, enthusiasm for the Objective and criticism of the parliamentarians' failure to abide by it waned in Party circles.³⁴ Yet this admission of defeat left Labor ideologically more threadbare than hitherto.

Bereft of ideas or principles, Labor politicians were eminently corruptible, according to Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory*. First published in 1950, this famous novel expressed in no uncertain terms a deep contempt for the workers' parliamentary representatives. Around the same time but in dispassionate academic fashion, Professor Henry Mayer queried the 'initiative-resistance model' in political science, which had portrayed Labor as the party of initiative in Australian political life and the non-Labor parties as mere parties of resistance. In 1956 Mayer maintained there were strong elements of 'negativism' or 'resistance' within the Labor Party, such as narrowness of objectives; absence of a positive policy to implement socialism and constitutional reforms; internal rigidity and mechanical discipline, leading to general orthodoxy; and confusion and uncertainty on foreign policy.³⁵

Trade union militants also expressed impatience with Caucus in the 1950s and 1960s and were deeply critical of its timid responses to industrial issues, but ALP strategists, anxious to improve the public image of the Party, sought to distance Caucus even further from such critics. The primary victim in this renovation of Caucus was its long-standing internal critic and supporter of the industrial militants, Eddie Ward, who had been expected to become Arthur Calwell's deputy in 1960. According to Ward's biographer, he was 'the last of the radicals, the so-called Labor straightbacks'.³⁶ Party powerbrokers were losing patience with the likes of Ward, whom they believed might listen to working-class electors rather than obey Party chiefs and faction leaders. This internal struggle disguised the problem that neither Ward's type of industrial militant nor the State and Federal Executives were able to adjust to the changing composition of both the working class and the Labor constituency. The election of 43-year-old Gough Whitlam as Deputy Leader in March 1960 was engineered by Party king-makers to provide a young, non-Catholic, middle-class, socially progressive counterpart to Calwell.³⁷ This move accommodated the considerable emphasis on youth and the de-emphasis on economic privation that characterised the late 1950s and 1960s—and removed the 'problem' of Eddie Ward.

The under-representation of women as candidates in winnable seats and therefore in Caucus was becoming an issue, although one studiously ignored by most male powerbrokers for another couple of decades. A Queensland member warned in 1960 that if women did not get a fair go soon, the Party 'might find the under-dog is prepared to adopt good Labor militant tactics and insist upon their right to strike—they won't make cups of tea and wash up'.³⁸ Despite its blokey image, a new breed of blokes such as Lionel Murphy, Bill Hayden, Jim Cairns, Gordon Bryant and Moss Cass assisted Whitlam in repositioning the Labor Party as the more liberal and socially progressive party on

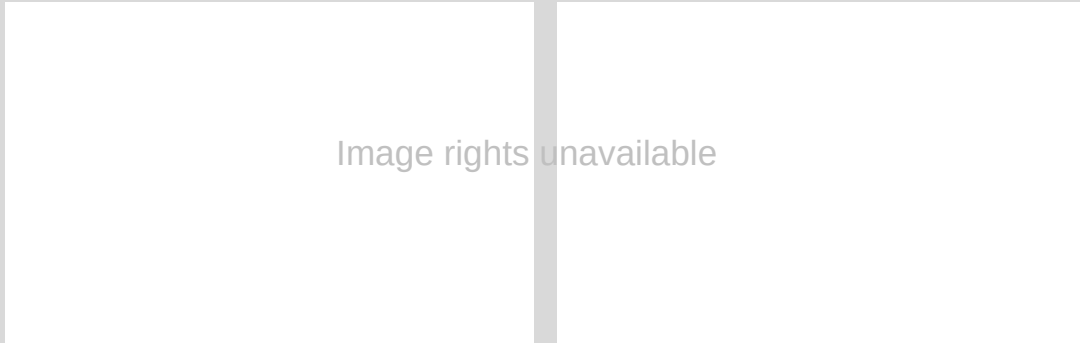
matters such as equal pay for women, rights for Aborigines, withdrawal from the Vietnam War and abolition of conscription, the environment, divorce, availability of contraception, abortion law reform, homosexual law reform and abolition of the White Australia Policy. This division of opinion within Caucus and the Party as a whole highlighted emerging divisions within the Labor constituency, as 'traditional' trade-union militants and new tertiary-educated, socially aware professionals sought to forge an alliance.

For many, this alliance was founded on common criticism of Labor's continuing caution on industrial issues—for instance, its lack of commitment to abolishing the penal clauses of the arbitration system. Here, militant trade unionists were now joined by New Left critics, who not only decried Labor politicians' lack of commitment to working-class struggles but also raised anew the concerns voiced by earlier critics such as the IWW and Childe. With the enthusiasm for more participatory forms of democracy and wariness about political hierarchies that characterised New Left politics, these radicals repeated the argument that well-paid representatives in Parliament would necessarily misrepresent the working class. Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia* maintained in 1970 that the record of the ALP confirmed Robert Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy' because, despite its democratic structures, in practice it was 'dominated by politicians'. Not only did the politicians inevitably come to control the wider Party, argued McQueen and others but, equally inevitably, Labor politicians used their parliamentary positions more for personal than for working-class advancement.³⁹

The 'opportunism' noted by the New Left critics was used to explain not only the waning economic egalitarianism but also the waxing social progressivism of Labor politicians. The fashions and concerns of the post-war world that ultimately produced the new social movements were acting upon Labor politicians during the 1960s in subtle but profound ways. Caucus listened to these new voices with considerably greater attention than it did when socialist or industrially militant spirits led the chorus. The emergent new social movements were not seeking any alteration in the class structure; rather, they were acting to defuse class politics and broaden the Labor Party's electoral base.⁴⁰ When the Women's Electoral Lobby interviewed candidates contesting the December 1972 federal election, Labor candidates emerged as considerably more successful than their Coalition counterparts from this feminist interrogation of personal attitudes towards women's issues. Caucus members even led the wider Party organisation into support for the wide range of progressive policies that characterised the Whitlam period—for instance, Immigration and Ethnic Affairs Minister Al Grassby formulated the policy of multiculturalism, which cemented support for Labor from ethnic communities.

The pace of social change set by the Whitlam Government silenced most critics on the Labor side, who were generally too busy defending the Whitlam reforms from conservative attack. Trade union leaders such as Jack Mundey, who warned workers not to place too much faith in Labor politicians and to maintain industrial militancy as a better protector of wages and conditions, were few and far between.⁴¹ New Left commentary was now deploring the changed social composition of Caucuses in federal and state Parliaments, developing

FAREWELL TO THE LEFT



Left: Bob Catley (circled) displays his left-wing credentials in 1971 as he holds aloft a Ho Chi Minh banner. (Private collection, John Scott) Right: Time moves on. Bob Catley dressed in a dinner suit at the Lodge with less formal Caucus members. Left to right: Duncan Kerr, Russ Gorman, Bob Hawke, Leo McLeay, Jim Snow and Brian Courtice. (Private collection, John Scott)

Bob Catley and Bruce McFarlane became leading figures of the New Left with their publication in 1974 of *From Tweedledum to Tweedledee. The New Labor Government in Australia*. It was described as ‘a pretty good roasting of the pretensions of social democratic politicians’. After the 1975 dismissal Catley was recruited to the Left of the Labor Party, assisting with many policy documents, before becoming spin-doctor, policy maker and speechwriter for the Hawke Labor Government. Eventually he served one term from 1990 to 1993 as Labor MHR for Adelaide.

Catley had already fallen out with Bruce McFarlane, ‘an occurrence triggered by his loudly singing the Internationale and some old Wobbly songs like “Praise Boss” and “Bump Me into Parliament” in a suburban Chinese restaurant and eliciting a response of “God Save the Queen” from

a neighbouring table’. By the end of his term in Parliament his political transformation was completed, confirming the rightward tendencies of Labor politicians he had described in *From Tweedledum to Tweedledee*.

In a farewell to the Left, ‘The Knowledge of the World is the Enemy of God’, published in the conservative journal *Quadrant* in May 2000, he listed the aspects of his parliamentary term of which he was proud: that he supported ‘the war on Iraq, . . . the deregulation of the Australian economy . . . globalisation, and many other worthy causes . . . I also remorselessly opposed the idealist and Marxist left’. He became a liberal, he explained, because ‘the remnants of idealism were run over by the realities of political life’.

Verity Burgmann

Humphrey McQueen’s notion of ‘technocratic laborism’: the removal of old-style ‘paleolaborites’ by politicians such as Whitlam and Don Dunstan. As well-educated professionals who did not own substantial controlling capital or productive power, they were both ‘progressive’ yet deeply critical of ideologies such as class struggle and working-class power. Such people, according to the critics, had taken over the Labor Party and moved it from a party committed to abolishing capitalist exploitation to one determined to manage capitalism

more efficiently.⁴² In 1974 Bob Catley and Bruce McFarlane argued in *From Tweedledum to Tweedledee* that Labor politicians had shifted away from concern with redistribution funded by steeply progressive taxation measures towards an emphasis on economic growth to contain distributional tensions. The new strategy required incentives and improved rates of profit, and the use of non-progressive levies to reduce disparities not between classes but between regions.⁴³

These New Left academic critics signalled a return to traditional criticisms of Caucus while anticipating also the opprobrium that was to greet the Hawke and Keating administrations in the period of globalisation. A few months after the accession of the Hawke Labor Government, Andrew Milner predicted that 'illusions in Labor's supposed radicalism' would be dissipated, for 'there will be no radical reforms from this government, led by men who are dedicated to the loyal pursuit of ruling class interests'.⁴⁴ From within Labor ranks, the Victorian Cain Government (1982–90) was a rather lonely critic of federal Caucus' subservience to the economic rationalists who were starting to dominate policy-making in Canberra, and was punished for its reproaches.⁴⁵

A plethora of critical accounts of Labor in office under Hawke and Keating appeared from the late 1980s onwards.⁴⁶ These critics, however, wrote from inside the academy and outside the Labor Party. Within Caucus, according to academic critics, there was a 'narrowing of debate' under the domination of a right-wing economic agenda and the socialist Left's limpness was 'depressing'.⁴⁷ Moreover, the industrial wing of the labour movement no longer offered the same resistance as before to the actions of the political wing. Even communist or formerly communist union officials such as Laurie Carmichael, Tas Bull and Tom McDonald supported the government's Accord. The small number of critics from within, such as Andrew Scott and occasional contributors to *Labor History Essays* and *Labor Essays*, have generally been obliged to air their criticisms via academic channels, such as books, due to the paucity of meaningful internal Party debate that seriously canvassed real alternatives to existing policies. 'Any views that were seen as backward-looking or clinging to the past tended to become very marginalised,' notes Scott.⁴⁸ Other critics from within, principally Mark Latham, have been counter-critics rather than critics, urging an even more rapid abandonment of Labor's traditional social democratic project in favour of Tony Blair and Tony Giddens' politics of 'The Third Way'.⁴⁹

Ironically, the relative absence of critique is caused by the same process that demands critique. Organic intellectuals of the working class, the most cogent critics of parliamentary Labor in earlier decades, have become an endangered species as university-trained staff increasingly control trade union bureaucracies and win preselection for Labor seats. There has been more healthy criticism of the masculine nature of Caucus than of its class bias.

Prominent Labor women have been scathing, in recent years, about the boys' club nature of the FPLP. Jennie George claimed there was a male bias in preselection, that she was 'tired of picking up the papers and reading about what's being organised for the boys in terms of seats'. Senator Margaret Reynolds argued there were differing selection criteria for men and women seeking preselection: 'Men are not selected by virtue of their academic

qualifications or their experience in the field. [Men] are selected by virtue of their interest, commitment and networking, the numbers game . . . merit is never to the fore when men are preselected.' However, the triumph of the affirmative action policy that commits the Party to preselecting women in a third of winnable seats by 2002 will not necessarily favour strong, independent-minded women. As Kay Setches of the Affirmative Action Working Party observed: 'The factions want to nominate women in those positions that would work for them. So they want to nominate women that will do as the "warlords" say. Do what the factional leaders say.'⁵⁰ For men, as for women.

While female Party members are justified in pressing their claims for greater gender balance in caucuses, it is unfortunate that workers are not demanding that people earning less than half the average wage be preselected in at least half the winnable seats; but there are too few workers left in the Party to raise such concerns. In any case, once in Parliament, Labor members join the ranks of the top 10 per cent of salary earners. Payment of members, the nineteenth-century reform that made representation of workers possible, has also made misrepresentation of workers probable.

The 'middle-classing' of the Labor Party, most marked in the occupational backgrounds of its politicians but apparent also in its membership and voting base, is glaringly evident in its policies of imposed wage restraint, privatisation, deregulation, award restructuring and enterprise bargaining.⁵¹ In 1999 Michael Thompson argued that the ALP has alienated traditional working-class Labor voters, while securing the support of middle-class trendies, because it has been taken over by tertiary-educated professionals who have imposed social agendas hostile to blue-collar culture.⁵² Unfortunately, Thompson not only assumes, inaccurately, that blue-collar workers oppose equity issues such as equal pay for women, gay rights and land rights, but is more critical of the social liberalism of Caucus than of its economic liberalism, which has been more truly injurious to working-class interests.

Peter Beilharz's analysis points to the fundamental ambiguity in twentieth-century Laborism. While it began with a call for socialism, the dominant institutions of the movement consented to the new liberal-driven arrangements, which sought the civilising of capitalism.⁵³ Few would now explain this failure as the fault of Caucus, for it is now far more subordinate than it was earlier. But Caucus has, at each and every stage, facilitated the process of adaptation to capitalism. Moreover, Caucus is symbolic of this process of adaptation, in the social origins and mode of life of Labor politicians, who fly at the front of planes to places where they are served by armies of attendants and made to feel important. A decreasing proportion of these well-paid Labor politicians send their children to state schools, to mix with the poorer socioeconomic groups. A nexus appears to exist between policies and personnel; the increasing conservatism of Caucus mirrors its composition. Critics of Caucus until the mid-1980s, following Childe's analysis, tended to blame Caucus cowardliness on fear of electoral repercussions, in addition to the psychological pressures and the material inducements of the parliamentary club.⁵⁴ However, from the mid-1980s Caucus supported and many of its members promoted economic rationalist policies to assist 'globalisation', initiatives reflecting the underlying

interests of dominant Australian corporations, despite the fact that these reversals of traditional Labor policies were not popular with most voters.⁵⁵

As Labor's external critics predicted from the outset, the attempt to make and unmake social conditions via a parliamentary strategy, dependent on the will of professional politicians paid several times the average wage, was always unlikely to succeed. Yet the critics, inside and outside the Party, nonetheless served as its conscience, reminding the politicians that the needs and interests of those who suffered most under capitalism could not be entirely forgotten. There has been too little internal resistance of late to the dismantling of the Labor project, however that was understood; we are witnessing a dearth, if not death, of criticism. The far-reaching nature of the task before the Party guaranteed that the gap between expectation and fulfilment would always be large; but until recently the Party was at least able to remind itself of the interests of its core constituency. And, in the Party's capacity for self-criticism, there lay hope for those who labour.

CAUCUS AND THE FACTIONS

Michelle Grattan

Factions of one kind or another have always been a feature of the ALP and its federal Caucus, and for much of its history the connotations of factionalism were more negative than positive. The Left, the Langites and later the Groupers formed factions. The factional struggles within the New South Wales branch of the Party during the 1920s flowed over into the federal Caucus—so that in 1929 there were two ‘tickets’ for the Cabinet, sponsored by the Australian Workers’ Union and the State Executive of New South Wales.¹ Warren Denning described the atmosphere in the Caucus during 1930 and 1931 when ‘Party meetings became scenes of bitter recrimination, with factions attacking the Ministry with the abandon of desperation, and attacking each other with equal ferocity’.² Eventually they destroyed the Ministry and left Labor unfit to govern for a decade. While these groupings did not have the formality of the modern factions, they could be equally potent—and destructive.

Robert Murray noted that in the Caucus of the early 1950s, three factions—Left, Right and Centre—could be identified.³ The Centre compromised ‘conventional social democrats’, including the Leader, Evatt.⁴ The Right was mostly ‘conventional Catholics’. But the 1949 election had brought into the Caucus a new group of fiercely anti-communist Catholics from Victoria, and they gave the factional conflict a much sharper edge.⁵ The damage caused by the Split kept Labor in the wilderness for a further seventeen years.

In Whitlam’s time a factional pattern was ‘discernible’ but ‘this was not a period of endemic factionalism’, and factionalism could not be blamed for his government’s severe problems. According to Clem Lloyd, new members who



*'IT'S CALLED THE ALPSTER'. 'Doc' Evatt is at the wheel of the 'Alpster' designed especially for the Labor Party of the mid-1950s. The car's left- and right-hand drive highlights the sectarian and factional divisions in Caucus. (John Frith, *Melbourne Herald*, 23 March 1955; National Library of Australia)*

entered Caucus in 1969 and 1972 'were often impatient with conventional Labor factionalism', assessing issues 'on their merits or on how they might affect the electorate. These pragmatic evaluations were characteristic of the Labor Government from 1972 to 1975 (more so perhaps in caucus than Cabinet)'.⁶ Barry Cohen, who entered Parliament in 1969, recalled two decades later that in his early days only the Left had any organisation, while contrary to myth the Right at the federal parliamentary level did not meet as a group to discuss philosophy or strategy.

While the Left caucused regularly to decide their position and support for colleagues, the Right's only contact was through a strange process of muttered conversations and telephone calls. Leaders of the Right emerged by a mysterious consensus rather than any form of election. Whenever the troops were needed to defeat an onslaught from the Left, the telephone wires ran hot.⁷

Senator Jim McClelland, who arrived in 1971, felt that after the 'routing of the Groupers, the factions of the Party had hardened into what were, for practical purposes, two separate parties . . . friendships with members of the opposing party were commoner than friendships between members of different factions'.⁸

The factionalism that overtook the federal Caucus when Labor gained office in 1983 was of a different order from anything that had gone before. In the first place, it was comprehensive, embracing nearly the whole Caucus, and based on the ubiquitous closed 'meeting'. Factions operated almost as parties within the Party, with their own leaders and formal spokesmen. Second, while factionalism had strong critics, who sometimes included the Leader, fundamentally it was seen as a positive force. As well as being an instrument for distributing spoils and a vehicle for pushing policy positions, factionalism had become a vital tool of management in government. Rodney Cavalier, a former NSW minister, observed that:

... [Factional leaders] put in place a new form of Labor governance—a troika of Prime Minister, Cabinet and faction. The Prime Minister and Cabinet were going to be able to get on with running the country. In exchange the factions took it upon themselves to manage many of the issues of potential conflict and assumed the monopoly right to provide *and* to select every position from the Cabinet to a trip to Western Samoa.⁹

The discipline imposed by the factional system was a key to how the Labor Party in the 1980s successfully executed a huge policy transition, as it swallowed deregulatory programs that were essentially being imposed on Australia and its national government by globalisation. In the process, the factional system transformed the way power was shared in the Party generally and in the Caucus particularly. In the Party, a national factional system supplanted the traditional state based power grid. In the Caucus, key factional leaders, most notably Senator Graham Richardson and Senator Robert Ray of the Right and Gerry Hand of the Left, enjoyed as much power, even while still backbenchers, as senior ministerial colleagues.

The new situation was apparent in the selection of the first Hawke Ministry. Cohen recounted how this occurred:

Once it was clear we had won, the former secretary of the NSW branch and newly elected senator, Graham Richardson, convened a meeting of all the members of the NSW right-wing . . . we were told that instead of the usual process of a consensus being reached on about three-quarters of the ministry by the self-appointed faction leaders, with the rest a matter of pot luck, he, Robert Ray and Gerry Hand were going to attempt to stitch up a deal whereby the whole twenty-seven members of the ministry were agreed to by all factions. It was an audacious plan which, to most of our recollections, had never been attempted before.¹⁰

The ticket was elected by an overwhelming majority of the Caucus. Richardson, Ray and Hand had demonstrated their extraordinary degree of power, which would grow over the coming years. Richardson later admitted he had felt somewhat uneasy voting for old enemies and indeed had supported right-winger Bill Morrison, who was not on the ticket but whom he didn't want to see humiliated, instead of the ticket's Brian Howe, from the Left. It was 'the only time in my life,' he recalled, 'that I didn't vote for the "ticket".'¹¹

Writing as Labor was on the cusp of government, Lloyd had observed that: 'The Left is the only element of the caucus which maintains an alternative structure to the formal caucus organisation . . . There is now no strong countervailing faction to the Left within the caucus.'¹² But there were signs of the imminent consolidation that would transform the Caucus into a fully factionalised body. The transition was being pushed by events in the Caucus and the wider Party, including the operation of more nationally focused Party rules and the factional manoeuvring in the Hawke–Hayden struggle. The election of the Hawke Government gave factionalism added impetus.



*Formed in 1984, the Centre Left was characterised by some as the 'Bill Hayden Protection Society'. It included a number of senior Cabinet ministers and saw itself as less aggressive than the Left and Right factions. (Colquhoun, **Sydney Morning Herald**, 21 February 1984; Chris Henning; National Library of Australia)*

The change was soon completely realised. Lloyd and Swan wrote in 1987 of the federal Caucus:

In many ways, the three National Faction Caucuses have pre-empted the processes of the traditional national Caucus because they have negotiated the crucial decisions before the issues in question get to National Caucus. The National Faction Caucuses at the National Parliamentary level negotiate directly with each other over policy issues and, more importantly, each negotiates directly with the Prime Minister and Cabinet.¹³

The birth of the Centre Left faction in February 1984 extended the factional system and ensured factionalism blanketed nearly the entire Parliamentary Party. Launched at a conference in Adelaide, the Centre Left was the smallest faction in the Caucus but with a clutch of senior ministers and the 'swing' vote, its power was immediately apparent. A December 1984 count put the Right at 45, the Left 34, the Centre Left 27, with 5 Victorian independents who had links to a greater or lesser degree with the Centre Left. This left just seven members non-aligned.¹⁴ The Centre Left was partly 'a ministerial self-protection society'—its ministers had a disproportionate share of jobs and might have been at risk in the next Ministry ballot if they had not flexed their numbers.¹⁵ It was a 'top-down' faction, getting its initial grip in the Federal Parliamentary Party, then extending to the state machines (but in the outer states of South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, not New South Wales and Victoria). The Centre Left was a power base for former Leader Bill Hayden, and Mick Young, who was just back in Cabinet after a wilderness period in the wake of the Combe-Ivanov affair. It included Senator Peter Walsh, John Dawkins and Neal Blewett among its ministerial line-up. The idea of formalising a Centre faction had been scouted before the Hawke Government. One of those involved recalled: 'The centre was seen as extremely vulnerable. There was a feeling that unless there was organisation, the centre would get knocked off by the Right and the Left. The Hayden thing [Hayden's replacement by Hawke] crystallised it.'

A VIEW FROM THE LEFT

Tom Uren:**On the Left in his early years**

When I first went to Canberra in early 1959, there was no organised Left group in the federal ALP caucus. Although a loosely knit grouping considered itself of that persuasion, it consisted mostly of anti-Catholics, although some members were militants or socialists. Members of the old Left in those days didn't really work for collective decisions; when we had ballots they all considered themselves field marshals who wanted to stand for respective positions. The only thing we could do was to let them stand and interchange their preferences.

On the election of the Whitlam Ministry and the 'Tuesday Club'

Before the new ministers could be sworn in, the caucus met to vote on the membership of the ministry. Although Whitlam was not really a numbers man, Rex Connor had blamed him for getting him knocked off as a shadow minister after the 1969 elections. So in 1972 I made it clear to my Left colleagues that I thought Connor's policies were important for the incoming government, and that the Left should support him in the ballot. The other people I went out of my way to support were Leslie Johnson and Gordon Bryant. Johnson was a progressive person who had made a great contribution in Parliament over a number of issues, from education to Aboriginal affairs. I argued strongly with Whitlam for Johnson to be given the portfolio of Housing. Bryant himself was a complete individualist in so many ways, and with great human values. But I don't think he turned out to be an outstanding minister. He had his own ways of doing things.

A ticket was also run in the ballot by members of what had come to be known as the Tuesday Club. This was a group from both the Right and the

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Leading members of the NSW Left and significant Caucus players. Left to right: Arthur Gietzelt, Tom Uren and Bruce Childs pictured at a NSW ALP Annual Conference in the late 1970s. (Private collection, Tom Uren)

Left who met regularly for lunch meetings when Parliament was sitting. Members of the Tuesday Club included Lionel Bowen, Gordon Bryant, Les Johnson, Paul Keating, Arthur Gietzelt and Moss Cass. No members of the shadow cabinet attended, although I knew what went on and was briefed after each of their luncheons. The Tuesday Club ticket, which included the existing fourteen members of the shadow ministry as well as thirteen new faces, was supported to a great extent by both Left and Right factions. The only two on the Tuesday Club ticket who did not get up were Paul Keating and Arthur Gietzelt.

On his election as Deputy Leader in 1976

In the election for party Leader, Whitlam was re-elected fairly comfortably, although Frank Crean and Lionel Bowen both opposed him. But the ballot for deputy leadership was a Melbourne Cup field. The primary votes of the candidates in this ballot were Uren 15, Keating 13, Young 13, Beazley 6,

Bryant 5, Cass 4, Scholes 4, and Les Johnson 3. The final count was Uren 33 and Keating 30. (Although Keating was young, at that time he had been in parliament for about seven years.) In those days we did not regiment the Left and we did not preselect any Left candidate; any person from the Left who wanted to run was allowed to contest the ballot. But it was all linked back through preferences, which meant that discipline could be maintained in the Left bloc because preferences could always be checked back. When I went into the ballot I was confident and

thought that I would win from the word 'go'. I told Whitlam before the ballot that I would win, and he said, 'Non-sense. You won't win'. Whitlam made it perfectly clear that his preferred candidate was Mick Young. This ballot also marked the first time that Keating emerged as a major leader of the Right, although Frank Stewart was still alive and a major voice within the New South Wales Right.

Extract from Tom Uren, *Straight Left*,
1994

At the Centre Left's 1984 inaugural meeting 'Hayden observed that the two heavy factions split heads and break arms in a most uncreative and unproductive manner. He expressed the view that Left of Centre people prefer to talk about ideas and policy rather than rhetoric'.¹⁶ Speaking publicly after its launch Hayden said the Centre Left 'will be contributing very much to the authority and influence of the leadership by the stability we believe it will help bring about'.¹⁷ Convenor Senator Peter Cook, then a backbencher, predicted that 'The Centre Left can perform the role of tying the party back together and giving it some stability'.¹⁸ The formation of the Centre Left also prompted the Right to intensify its formal organisation in the Caucus. The Centre Left was 'dry' in its economics. It played an important part in the run-up to the 1984 National Conference in facilitating acceptance of Treasurer Keating's change of the Platform to allow further bank deregulation, especially the entry of foreign banks. Indeed, in 'every decision taken at Conference, its support was vital to the Hawke Government's assertion of its policies within the ALP'.¹⁹

The 1984 Conference was the most factionalised in the Party's history. The Centre Left delivered to the government in spades but Prime Minister Hawke was angry when Blewett boasted of the victories in a ten-page paper critical of both Right and Left. Blewett, then a member of the outer Ministry, was sternly rebuked in Cabinet by Hawke. Some of his ministerial colleagues who had been involved in helping prepare the paper sat by silently.

The grip of factionalism was evident after the 1984 election, and it worked conservatively. All 23 members of the Ministry were returned without a contest. In the 1985 row over Bob Hawke's plan to cooperate with the United States in testing MX missiles off the Australian coast, the role of the factions as both exerters and containers of pressure was dramatically highlighted. The revelation of the secret plan appalled Caucus members across factional lines, leaving Hawke with no option but to back off. By the time the issue formally came up for debate, however, a deal had been done by the faction leaders at a Lodge breakfast: there would be no criticism in Caucus of the Prime Minister but a more 'consultative' structure would be introduced. A few months later,

A VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

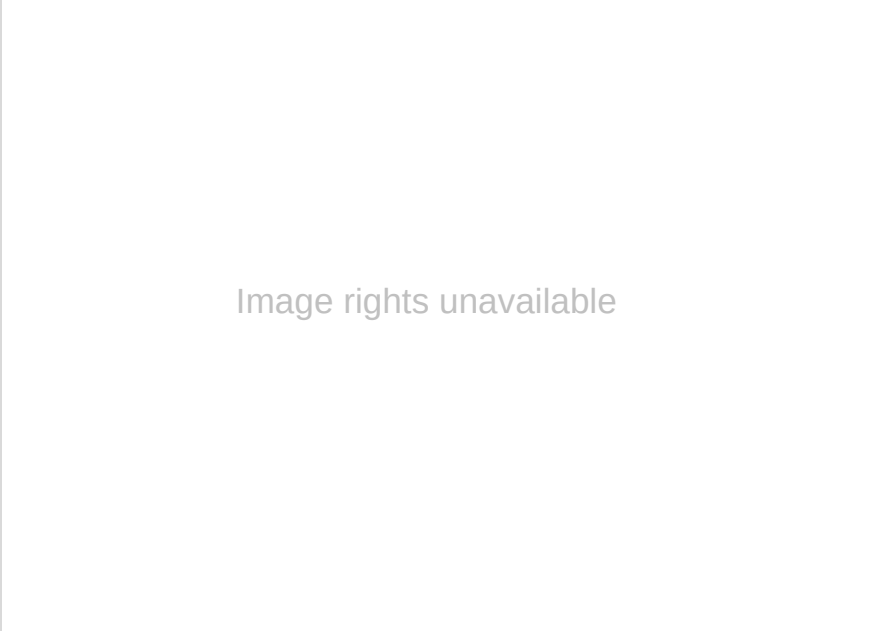


Image rights unavailable

Graham Richardson (left) and Robert Ray (right), the two dominant Right faction figures of the Hawke and Keating governments, busy on their parliamentary duties during Senate Question Time. Senate Leader Gareth Evans is in the foreground. (Michael Jones, News Limited)

**Graham Richardson:
On the need for a national Right**

As far as I was concerned, the prospect of Hawke becoming leader, as well as what could be achieved by the campaign to capture the leadership, was just what my faction needed. At the beginning of the 1980s the Left was the only national faction. They occasionally held national gatherings to include leading party figures who were not in the Caucus, their national Left caucus in the union movement never stopped meeting, and in Federal Parliament they already had a disciplined system in operation. This meant that in every Caucus ballot members of the Left would vote in pairs to ensure that no individual broke the collective line.

There was very little to counterbalance this kind of organisation. The New

South Wales Right had built an almost impregnable fortress around its home state, but no grouping in any other state called itself the Right. In each state, however, there was an anti-Left group, and the task as I saw it was to form a loose amalgam of these disparate groups. Some tentative steps in this direction had been attempted at the 1977 and 1979 conferences, but they never amounted to much. The one issue that united most of the anti-Left groups was the leadership. Hawke could be the rallying point for a national Right faction. The messiah had arrived. We just had to stop the party from crucifying him.

People like Paul Keating and Lionel Bowen had drawn together like-minded souls in a number of ballots during the late 1970s in particular, and as the 1980s dawned their efforts at drawing

support for a national Right faction began to pay off. Even though it was the only organised faction, the Left could not guarantee to win any Caucus ballot for one of their number and the Right couldn't either. So in the Caucus after the 1980 election, we would obviously have to convert some people who didn't like Hawke or those behind him . . .

On the Hawke–Keating leadership struggle

The battle was taking place in the Right, traditionally the most unified bloc of all. Very early in the piece, the passionately anti-Keating Robert Ray and I decided that we would not let the Right break up over the coming challenge. Over the previous three years Ray and Keating had disagreed several times, and at no stage had they been close. By the time the challenge finally came, the reasons for the antipathy were irrelevant. For both of us, the faction mattered more than either the champion or the challenger, and when the fireworks started we kept talking

and a lasting split was avoided. Most of the New South Wales Right who were Keating supporters had no problem in maintaining good relations with a majority of the so-called pro-Hawke coalition, and most of the others voting for Hawke had a similar view.

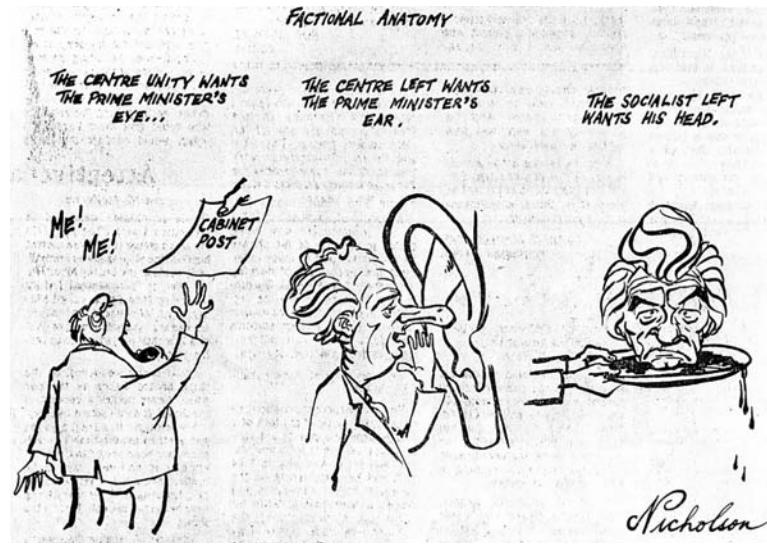
This did not mean that lobbying did not take place within the Right. In the months before the ballot Robert Ray, one of the best factional operators the party has ever seen or ever will see, worked on a number of people who were Keating supporters and not shy about saying so. Bob Catley, Senator Terry Aulich from Tasmania and Bob Collins all professed a belief that Keating should be the leader and finished up voting for Hawke. Whatever it took was provided. The Prime Minister had nothing to do with their conversion: the way to Damascus was pointed out by Robert Ray, and so was the transport to get them there.

Extract from Graham Richardson,
Whatever It Takes, 1994

nevertheless, Hawke was worried about the public impact of factionalism. Citing private polling conducted by the Party that showed factionalism as a negative, he suggested the Centre Left scale down its activities and declared that an excess of factionalism had damaged the government. 'If I had my way . . . there would not be any group (faction) meeting at all,' he said—and announced that he would not attend any further meetings of the Right.²⁰

Periodically members of the Caucus would complain of lack of consultation. One notable feature of the period, however, was the progressive incorporation of the Left. In the early stages of the Hawke Government, the Left acted, and was treated, as the 'opposition' within the government.²¹ Partly this was because the Left was resisting the government's fundamental changes to Party policy; the old guard, led by Tom Uren and Senator Arthur Gietzelt, was still in leadership positions. The four Left ministers wrote a letter to the Prime Minister to express concerns over economic policy; and they saw Hawke to protest about uranium policy.²² But there was a generational change under way and the Left's intellectual leader, Brian Howe, who had initially been something of a firebrand within the government, climbed the ministerial ladder and finally was taken into the inner circle of the Expenditure Review Committee in early 1987. As Minister for Social Security, Howe became a member of this 'razor gang', which combed budget bids, grilled ministers and kept the government to the rigours

*FACTIONAL ANATOMY'. This cartoon reflects the marginalised position of the Left faction in the Hawke Government in 1984. By the late 1980s increased Left representation had reduced factional tensions. (Peter Nicholson, *Age*, 21 February 1984; National Library of Australia)*



of fiscal responsibility. Howe's elevation, and later his move up to Deputy Leader, gave the Left greater involvement in decision-making while also imposing a significant restraint on it. Howe understood that to achieve his aims he had to cooperate with Keating.

As the Left behaved and was accepted as team players, so its rewards became greater. In 1983 it had 4 out of 27 ministers—Stewart West, Howe, Uren and Gietzelt. When Labor lost office in 1996 it had 8 out of 30. One of them, Peter Baldwin, who was Minister for Higher Education, said in 1990: 'The Left's ability to affect the Government's agenda is far higher than in the early days of the Government . . . the social justice strategy has been largely inspired by the Left.'²³ After he stepped down as Deputy Prime Minister in June 1995, Howe observed that 'the Left has moved from the perimeter of government to the very heart of government and plays a central role in setting the agenda'.²⁴

The Left's incorporation led by the early 1990s to a further division—between the 'Left Ins' and the 'Left Outs'. The ministers were the leading 'Ins'; those who had been squeezed from the Ministry and the ideological hardliners of the faction were 'Outs'. The phenomenon was obvious in the extra-parliamentary Left. The 'Ins' were a pragmatic 'new left' in the union movement: among them was the ACTU leader Martin Ferguson. The 'Outs' included the hardliners in the unions—for instance, the Metal Workers Union's George Campbell.²⁵

By 1987, 94 per cent of federal Labor MPs were in a faction.²⁶ Factional 'heavies' Richardson, Ray and Hand all became ministers that year. Factionalism still had its critics, and Barry Cohen publicly railed against the system when he was dumped from the Right's slate for the post-1987 election Ministry. The Centre Left lashed out in Caucus when, in a pincer movement by Right and Left, its share of chairmanships of parliamentary and Caucus committees was squeezed. The Centre Left was also becoming disgruntled about being painted too much the ally of the Right, which led to a close call for the Prime Minister in Caucus over a motion on privatisation. With the factional hard men now part of the

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*Robert Ray, Gerry Hand
and Peter Cook, key
figures in the Right, Left
and Centre Left factions
respectively, cast their votes
in a Caucus ballot at The
Lodge in 1989. (Private
collection, John Scott)*

Ministry, cross-factional deals became a little trickier. Nevertheless by late 1988, it could be observed that while the factions had, if anything, ‘been getting stronger as the mechanisms for placing their members’ bums on ministerial seats’, the lines between them on policy were becoming ‘increasingly blurred’.²⁷

In contrast to the early days of government, ‘when the Left put forward a clear and quite aggressive policy alternative to the Right . . . more recently the differences over substance between Right and Left seem to have narrowed and become less sharp. Almost everyone has turned into an economic rationalist’.²⁸ In the battle over privatisation in 1987, there were internal splits in the Right and the Centre Left. By the late 1980s there was doubt too about the cost that factionalism was imposing on the Party. In 1988 the Party’s National Secretary, Bob McMullan, who was about to enter the federal Parliament, pledged to join the small number of non-aligned Caucus members. He warned: ‘It’s getting too rigid and we are moving in the direction where I think in the long term [factionalism] contains the seeds of our destruction . . . We can’t go on like this or we will become ossified.’²⁹ With the factions claiming ‘their’ ministerial vacancies as they arose, there was talk of a dilution of ministerial talent. The ambivalence many felt about the factional system was summed up by Alan Griffiths (Maribyrnong, Vic.), a Right backbencher (and later a minister) when there was a controversy over filling a casual vacancy:

I think one of the key ingredients of the success of the Hawke Government has in fact been the factional system, although it is fair to say that there’s an almost palpable feeling of discontent around the caucus about how it’s operating at the moment, in relation to the filling of ministerial vacancies.³⁰

After the 1990 election Hawke did a deal with the factions to inject new ministerial blood and in particular to insist on the inclusion of Simon Crean and Senator Bob Collins, two right-wingers who would have missed out if the factions had prevailed. Hawke was acutely aware of the criticism that factionalism was blocking talent. Centre Left Minister Dawkins afterwards suggested that Caucus

should be made to feel it had a greater role in selecting the Ministry. 'At the moment they can only have a say within their factions.'³¹ While the factions tried to keep an iron grip on their ministerial positions, they had to undertake some internal renewal if only to accommodate the ambitions of their own. Apart from Cohen on the Right in 1987, veteran left-winger West, who had resigned from the Cabinet to the outer Ministry in 1983 because Cabinet solidarity was at odds with his and his faction's anti-uranium stance,³² was dropped in 1990 from the Left slate of candidates. West claimed that the harder stance he had taken on many issues, including privatisation, had brought retribution. 'At times, I've been not on the same line as Howe. Hand and Howe are much closer to the Prime Minister than I am,' he said.³³ Barry Jones lashed out at factional leadership when the Centre Left dumped him from its ministerial line-up. Claiming he would have won in an open ballot at the Caucus meeting, Jones observed sarcastically, 'When you talk to factional leaders about open ballots they just go white. They say, "Oh no, the caucus is not ready for that".'³⁴

Fortunately for the government, this tight Caucus factionalism did not extend to the Cabinet. According to one former minister, 'factional positions were not carried through—even with the Left—in general'. Another recalled left-wingers Howe and Baldwin almost always siding with Keating (Right), Dawkins (Centre Left) and Willis (Right) against Ray (Right), Hand (Left), Duffy (non-aligned) and Richardson (Right). At one meeting Kim Beazley (Right) turned to the latter group and said 'there's the true Left'.

The Hawke–Keating leadership struggle—the most dramatic and crucial battle of thirteen years of government—saw the factions divide internally. With both Hawke and Keating from the Right, the leadership ballots split that faction. Even the Left, which supported Hawke in both rounds of the contest of 1991, had defectors. In the second ballot, accepting it could not hold its members, the faction did not try to bind its members. Several of them defected to Keating in the tight vote, which he won 56 to 51. The fissures were apparent in policy issues that arose between the two leadership ballots. When Howe as the Left's Health Minister put forward a patient co-payment for Medicare, which the Keating forces challenged, the Left divided down the middle, caught between dislike of a co-payment and loyalty to its own minister. The Right also fractured, and gave its members a free vote.

The erosion of ideology continued. Neal Blewett, in his snapshot of the first Keating Government (1991–93), portrayed the Caucus factions as 'clans or tribes, grouped around factional leaders, with long histories of internal political cooperation, rather than as ideological groupings'. The tribal leaders 'had to pay obeisance to certain shibboleths . . . But provided the leaders could secure offices and perks for members of the tribe, the tribe would acquiesce in most ideological accommodations reached by the leaders of the factions'.³⁵ Blewett estimated the factional strengths as Right 45, Left 35, Centre Left 20 and Independents 10. Another entry in the Blewett diary captures the frustration and anxiety of the Centre Left as it was squeezed between Right and Left, and eroded by an emergent non-factional faction. He relates a Centre Left dinner at which

Rod Sawford [Port Adelaide, SA] articulated some general concerns when he pointed out that under the 'malign influence' of Neil O'Keefe [Burke, Vic.] and Bob McMullan [ACT] the ten unaligned independents have now been joined by Rob Hulls [Kennedy, Qld] and John Gayler [Leichhardt, Qld], refugees from the right, and they are virtually functioning as another faction. The group is now nearly as big as the centre-left, although given that there is little effort at policy discipline, they are in that sense not a faction.³⁶

Early in his prime ministership Keating voiced some private criticisms of factions and made it clear he wanted a greater say in the selection of his Ministry. This he achieved after the 1993 election, when he was granted a degree of power seldom accorded a Labor leader (reminiscent of the freedom accorded Chris Watson when he chose the ALP's first federal Ministry in 1904). Both the Centre Left and the Right decided Keating should be allowed *carte blanche*. The generosity had its limits. Keating wanted left-winger Frank Walker (Robertson, NSW) in the Ministry. The Left baulked: Walker got there—but by the vote of the Right and the Centre. Walker did not run within the faction and was later suspended for a year for opposing the ticket. The Left voted against Walker in the Caucus ballot and had a 'show and tell' procedure to keep its members in line. By seizing an unprecedented degree of power to make his Ministry Keating, in the words of one commentator, left himself 'no recourse to the excuse that he has been saddled with an incompetent executive by a factionally hide-bound caucus'.³⁷

By the time Labor lost office in 1996 there was considerable criticism of what some Party members believed had become an over-rigid factionalism. Factionalism continued in the Caucus after Labor took up the Opposition benches but with significant changes that considerably weakened its impact. The towering personalities of the 1980s and early 1990s had either gone or stepped back from the frontbench. In the Right, the leadership of the New South Wales group was split between several figures: Leo McLeay (Watson, NSW), Laurie Brereton (Kingsford-Smith, NSW) and Michael Lee. Indeed, this had begun while Labor was still in government: the defining moment seems to have been Richardson's quitting Parliament. As a member of the Left observed, before Richardson's retirement in 1994, 'you knew who to pick up the phone to'.

By 2000 it was much less clear to whom the call should be made. In the Left, the 'soft left' grouped around former ACTU President Martin Ferguson (Batman, Vic.) and the 'hard left', led by Anthony Albanese (Grayndler) and Senator George Campbell, both from NSW; the latter also included leading Victorian members of the Shadow Ministry such as Jenny Macklin and Lindsay Tanner (Melbourne, Vic.). The soft left was more pragmatic and flexible. But the rift seemed more a product of personalities and history than ideology. Tanner, a 'dry', would more logically have seemed to fit the soft left.

The use of proportional representation to allocate positions among the factions brought peace in the Caucus. But the sub-factions were creating new tensions within the factions. Some in the Left talked of the need for proportional representation in distributing the spoils among the two sub-groups. The Right dealt with the problem by slicing up rewards on a state basis, between the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Right. The Caucus centre was

A VIEW FROM THE CENTRE

Bill Hayden:**On the formation of the Centre Left**

The Centre Left faction was formed after the 'hard numbers men', Robert Ray and Graham Richardson, of the Right from Victoria and New South Wales respectively arrived in the Caucus. We moderates occupying the middle ground could smell the threatening scent of these predators on the political breezes. Unprotected, we knew they would have us by the scruff of the neck in no time, shaking and jolting the political life out of us. So Centre Left was formed as an act of self-preservation for a gaggle of mild Fabian reformers. As Barry Jones once patiently explained to us at a meeting when we were anxiously exploring an identity crisis: 'We are a political lonely hearts club. What draws us together is that no-one else loves us'. A few seconds for the message to sink in, a few more of grave head-nodding agreement, and with that high crisis resolved we moved on to other, lesser business. In fact Centre Left was a powerhouse of ideas, of policy development and elaboration and most importantly it was consistently guided by principles of equity and progressive redistribution. In no time the irreconcilable postures adopted by the Right and Left were bridged as they conspired at ways of depleting the ministerial numbers from our faction. Their justification was simple: they had more numbers than us therefore they were entitled to more ministers. 'You don't believe it's fair?', we were queried, 'then let's put it to a democratic vote to find out'. In that lay a lesson in genuine political realism, of a particularly breathtaking variety.

On factions

Both of the major parties have structured factions, and with Labor these are more tightly organised and disciplined now than when I was Opposition Leader. They have been thoroughly formalised by the voting system used for Caucus elections. There is an advantage here

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Centre Left faction Ministers. Left to right: Bill Hayden, Susan Ryan and Neal Blewett pictured in Caucus. (Canberra Times)

for a leader in that this makes dealing with the internal organisation easier and more predictable. On the other hand, because of the authority of the Caucus to appoint ministries and more particularly shadow ministries in Opposition, a leader's authority can be undermined by the power of the factions, especially where he is attempting to exercise some discipline. In spite of that, a surprising degree of self-discipline is in place in the Labor Party; not only are the factions themselves disciplined, but a notion of fair play is also evident and exercised. Political power barons wheel and deal with one another, clash with opponents, form temporary alliances as faction interest requires, and defend their group's political territory fiercely when challenged. A successful faction leader effectively assumes a full-time role. Usually, a skilful faction chief is rewarded with election to the Ministry or Shadow Ministry, at which there should be little wonder, for these people control the ubiquitous 'numbers'. Occasionally the personal stimulation of exercising notable power is all the reward a faction chief wants; but that alone is rare. Not

surprisingly, these heavy numbers controllers are rarely effective at developing and persuasively propounding creative policy ideas, doubtless because they find themselves fully extended physically and intellectually in organising, or perhaps more properly 'fixing' the numbers. A Labor Opposition leader has to tread his way through this uneven field gingerly, set as it is with political bearpits and mantraps. He cannot afford to be part of a faction. On the other hand he cannot remain too apart from them. It is a tricky balancing act. Even factions can have several sub-strata, which makes dealing with these

entities an even more intricate affair. If he misjudges the extent to which he can confront a faction, the leader can unravel the splicing which holds together that extraordinary heterogeneity. While Labor is a single party in name, in fact it is an exceptionally complex coalition—and it cannot be Labor if it is not also emotional. That is why individuals entering the Party with no familiarity of its culture and symbols can experience so much difficulty coming to terms with the manner of its conduct.

Extract from Bill Hayden, *Hayden*, 1996

now a broad group within which former Centre Left members lamented the loss of glory and the former non-aligned accepted pragmatically the need to stick with mates in a party where everyone else did the same. After the 1996 election the diminished Centre Left and the independents met initially as two separate groups but were soon working as one. After the 1998 election they became a single entity. Reduced in numbers, with just 15 members against the Right's 46 and the Left's 35, they still held the balance of power. Power-sharing in Caucus was now complete, voting an aberration.

In the one major battle for a leading position, the contest for the deputy leadership in 1996 between two members of the Victorian Right, Gareth Evans and Simon Crean, the factions split. Factional argument over policy was a lot less intense. 'There have been very, very few factional type debates in caucus in the last four years,' said one Caucus source. On key issues of social justice, for example, little would separate many in the Left (such as Tanner) from figures on the Right. 'Most people in the Right would think that Tanner could possibly be in the Right. There's a great closing of the policy divide,' said one Right source. The New South Wales Right's Leo McLeay summarised what had happened over the previous few years:

The fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) meant the end of the big debates on foreign policy. With the ideology of foreign policy out of the way, the Left and the Catholic Right realised they had a lot of shared values—the values of social justice. Everyone could sign up to that agenda of social justice because we had all that clogging of international affairs out. About the early 1990s it started to be said 'The comrades and the mates are getting together!' We in the NSW Right were pragmatic, but what got us into politics was the desire to lift the floor for those from whom we sprang. The Left had the same aim—often the harder the Left, the closer the agenda to the young Catholics who'd got into politics in the 1960s.³⁸

In the Shadow Ministry, as in the Cabinet before 1996, the factional system was usually suspended. One shadow minister noted that from 1996 to 2000 there

had been perhaps up to ten votes at meetings of the frontbench and ‘there was never a situation where voting was by faction’. But the factional grip on slices of the Shadow Ministry was as firm as ever, discouraging the Leader from ad hoc changes. For example, one argument against expanding the Shadow Cabinet to include Carmen Lawrence, after she was cleared in a 1999 court case, was that it would upset the factional balance.

How the factional system would work when Labor is next in power is unpredictable. Most factional leaders see their forces as relatively benign Party units that no longer possess the sharp and sometimes damaging edge of their heyday. They had become machines for dividing the spoils, and the spoils of Opposition were inevitably limited. The proportional representation system had driven the real struggle for power further down, where it was fought out among a cast that included new figures starting to make their mark. The shrinkage of the centre was pushing Caucus members towards choosing between the two ends of the factional spectrum which, however, were converging in policy and even in tolerance of each other. Whether the factions will become stronger or weaker when Labor is again in government, they will not disappear, for they have become a key organising element of the modern Caucus.

RATS

John Iremonger

It is a terrible thing to see a man sell his principles and the Party that has lifted him up. I hope I shall never have the misfortune to leave my children the shame and dishonour of one who has become a traitor to his own class in order to serve the enemies of the people.

Joseph Aloysius Lyons, 1916¹

. . . It has been said that some of us are breaking the pledge we gave to the people. It is true that we gave a pledge, but it was based upon a policy which has since been changed . . . to deliberately break the associations of a lifetime is a step which no man, unless he is utterly bankrupt of sensibility, can take without deep pain and sharp mental suffering. That is my position today.

Joseph Aloysius Lyons, 1932²

When J. T. Lang rose in the House of Representatives to deliver his first speech on 7 November 1946, he could glower from the cross-bench at so many members who, like him, had defected or been expelled from the ALP. There was a rat to his right: Billy Hughes, a Labor founder and Labor Prime Minister, had rendered sterling service to the anti-Labor cause for three decades and would continue to serve for six more years. There were ex-rats to his left: Eddie Ward, whose election as a Langite had helped destroy the Scullin Labor Government, was now Minister for Transport and Minister for External Territories, and on the government backbench were Dan Mulcahy, Tom Sheehan, Rowley James, Joe Clark

and Bert Lazzarini. In the Senate John Armstrong was Minister for Munitions and Stan Amour was on the backbench. Their return to the fold by 1941 was a tribute to Curtin's tactical skill in dealing with 'Stabber Jack' Beasley's group to which, at various times, they had once belonged. And in the Speaker's chair was Sol Rosevear who, endorsed by the Lang-controlled New South Wales Party, had defeated federal Labor's candidate for Dalley, 'Red Ted' Theodore.

Lang's speech was no more than a pastiche of the vituperation he had long heaped on federal Labor in the pages of *Century* and that had finally goaded the New South Wales State Executive to expel him.³ Portentous, snide and expected, its central theme was common to the self-justification of so many rats: he was true Labor, the Labor Party occupying the Treasury bench was an impostor.

There must be an evil influence that affects all Labour Governments in Canberra. All the later Labour Prime Ministers seem to have been determined to prove that the Labour party's platform will not function in a practical manner for the government of our country . . . When the inevitable clash of fundamentals takes place, as it must, members on the Government benches will have to decide whether they will continue to follow the line of right-wing conservatism or whether they will take the democratic trail and return to the Labour Party Platform and aspirations.⁴

But Lang's very presence, and his hypocritical use of Left rhetoric, so incensed the Speaker that he spoke from the floor as the honourable Member for Dalley to deliver a counterattack:

The honourable member for Reid was my friend . . . he is now no more a friend of mine politically than the right honourable member for North Sydney (Mr Hughes) who ratted on the Labor Party in 1916 . . . on a thousand occasions I have heard him proclaim from the public platform and at Labour conferences that if ever the day came when the press of this country lauded him and featured him and the Opposition applauded him, he would no longer be a Labour man. I ask him to look around at his newfound friends.⁵

Lang, twice Labor Premier and, in a Labor career spanning 40 years, creator of no fewer than four Langite groups (although it depended how you counted them), six years after his expulsion remained part of Labor's story; rats were part of an enduring tradition.

The prehistory of ratting is to be found in the forces that created the colonial labour parties in the decade before Federation. The majority of the first federal Caucus had been trade union activists. In bitter contests between bosses and workers they had learnt a hard lesson: whatever the industrial tactic employed—strikes, picketing, go-slows—solidarity was a precondition for success; division a guarantee of failure.

Reams have been written about the continuing relationship between the industrial and parliamentary wings of the labour movement, but the one enduring legacy of these formative years is summed up in the pledge: its unequivocal commitment to solidarity on the floor of Parliament, to 'vote as a



'NAPOLEON IN EXILE'. *The Bulletin*, critical of Hughes' decision to continue in government after losing the support of Caucus, portrayed him as an unrepentant Napoleon on a lonely outcrop buffeted by the stormy Labor Caucus. (David Low, *Bulletin*, 23 November 1916; National Library of Australia)

majority of the Parliamentary Party may decide at a duly constituted Caucus meeting'. The lineage is clear: in breaking that solidarity the rat is the first cousin of the scab and blackleg. This kinship was acknowledged in 1912 by Henry Lawson who has his old unionist affirm in the poem, 'Too Old to Rat':

I've been Union thirty years,
And I'm too old to rat.⁶

Faced with the extreme fluidity of colonial politics, and the tactical and material temptations of doing deals with the shifting coalitions of non-Labor politicians, the representatives of labour faced the task of creating a Party that would not melt away in the maze of temporary alliances and short-term compromises. The Pledge was the precondition for survival; the Caucus was the instrument to create, test and maintain solidarity; the price of cohesion was to be expulsion or defection.

So ratting was built into the very fabric of the new Party. Despite, or rather because of, a disciplinary instrument considered draconian by Labor's opponents, the FPLP prospered to lead the nation during the Great War. Barely two years into that war, Caucus would be the site for a contest that would determine the Party's future. With the support of over one-third of Labor's parliamentary representatives, Labor Prime Minister Billy Hughes (already

expelled by the New South Wales State Executive) became W. M. Hughes, anti-Labor Prime Minister. Even the pallid minutes of the Caucus were unable to disguise the import of what had happened: in a battle between the leadership and the rest of Caucus over military conscription, the latter had prevailed.

Mr Finlayson moved That Mr W. M. Hughes no longer possesses the confidence of this party as Leader, and that the office of Chairman of this party be, and is hereby declared vacant . . . [Meeting resumed 2.30] . . . Mr Hughes made a statement, after which he left the chair asking those who thought with him to follow him.⁷

Joe Lyons, the newly elected Leader of the Tasmanian Party, remarked that Hughes and his followers had saved the Party a lot of trouble by definitely placing themselves in open antagonism to the official Labor Party. 'They were all over the fence and out, as far as Labor was concerned.'⁸

A poignant example of the bitter legacy of the conscription split occurred in 1919 and involved rat W. G. Spence and a trio of AWU members known as the 'Three Musketeers of the Trades Hall'—Senator Jack Barnes, John McNeill (Wannon, Vic.) and Senator Andy McKissock (Vic.). The three were united by 'devotion to the labour movement', 'reverence for Spence as its grand old man', and a pre-war pledge to ensure that a Cootamundra wattle would be planted on each other's graves. At McKissock's funeral in 1919 as his two colleagues fulfilled this pledge, they noticed Spence, 'a pathetic old man standing alone and forlorn some 50 metres away', isolated from his former friends and admirers by the 'unbridgeable chasm' his ratting had created.⁹

Within two decades, no fewer than 12 of the 24 who formed the first federal Caucus would end their political careers serving Labor's enemies or otherwise be cast into darkness. It could be said that Labor, state as well as federal, had lost the best of its first generation and that anti-Labor had entered into a quarter-century of benefiting from the skills learnt on the toughest training ground in politics. Hughes' talents would be available to Labor's opponents for another three-and-a-half decades. Senator George Pearce, another Labor founder, would earn the gratitude of the conservatives (and the nickname 'The Vicar of Bray') for his service as a competent stabilising force in every anti-Labor cabinet from 1916 to 1937.¹⁰ And the story was repeated in the states: in South Australia, the Vaughan Labor Government became the Vaughan anti-Labor Government; in New South Wales, Labor Premier Holman formed an anti-Labor Ministry which included five rats; in Tasmania, Labor Premier John Earle's defection would usher in seven-and-a-half years of anti-Labor rule.¹¹

Deprived of the skills of many of those who had forged the Party, the FPLP remained sufficiently robust to endure five election defeats in thirteen years before it returned to the Treasury benches in 1929. Circumstances could hardly have been worse for that victory. The Caucus that had fractured and survived, would fracture again and survive again. Conscription was the force that first split the Party; the Great Depression would provide the next.

After his defection in March 1931 Joe Lyons, once Tasmanian Labor Premier

and then federal Labor minister, expressed surprise at how well behaved were the Party room meetings of the United Australia Party in contrast to the *Sturm und Drang* of the FPLP Caucus.¹² Lyons, who only became 'Honest Joe' after the anti-Labor press singled him out as a candidate for ratting, was being disingenuous. He well knew from the circumstances of his defection (his wooing by a secret group of businessmen) and the manner of his selection as anti-Labor leader and then Prime Minister (private negotiations with his predecessor Latham) that the conservatives' party meetings were not where power was exercised. The UAP's party room was a talking shop where decisions made elsewhere were discussed and parliamentary tactics devised; but Caucus *was* the FPLP, the place where, notwithstanding what went on at Federal Conference or in the state branches, the endless contest took place to determine Labor's character. Defections or expulsions were the necessary outcomes of this struggle.

There could be no better demonstration of Caucus as the place where the identity of Labor was endlessly determined than the fact that Lyons' defection with his five fellow rats was prompted by a protracted battle between a state faction and the federal Party.¹³ Out of this seeming chaos, portrayed by the press as a series of bar-room brawls, Caucus was presented with a choice of three responses to the impact of the Great Depression: Niemeyer's financial rectitude embodied in the Melbourne Plan; the Premiers' Plan that, thanks to Theodore, softened some of the blows of Niemeyer; and the Lang Plan (cobbled together over a weekend during the February 1931 Premiers' Conference, convened by Scullin to review the financial state of the nation) that Caucus recognised as a weapon for its author's attempt to dominate the federal Party.¹⁴ After Lyons had defected, Lang retaliated against Caucus' rejection of his Plan by bringing down the Scullin Government when his agent, Beasley, moved to destroy Theodore. Beasley and his Lang group ratted when, having walked out after losing the contest in Caucus, they moved the fight on to the floor of Parliament eight months later. With the help of Lyons and the conservatives, they were able to defeat the government.¹⁵ The price of this savage act of revenge was two bitterly opposed Labor parties in New South Wales and a decade in federal Opposition.

So it took an extraordinary act of will on the part of Scullin's successor as Leader of Caucus, John Curtin, to pursue unity when it meant overcoming the justified enmity of Ben Chifley and other FPLP stalwarts to bring the wreckers back into the fold. After much hard bargaining, a decade of frustration and two attempts, the first in March 1936 when the Langites rejoined Caucus for four years and the second in March 1941, Beasley and his group were readmitted and the Party readied for office.¹⁶ This was not Curtin's achievement alone; without Caucus' understanding of what was at stake, Labor would not have led a country at war.

Just as it would be difficult to overestimate the significance of the unity achieved in 1941, so too it would be difficult to exaggerate the bitterness attached to the figure of the rat. Twice, rats had cost Labor office. That Labor led the country for less than four-and-a-half of the 24 years between the Fisher

BILLY HUGHES, JACK LANG AND THE CARTOONISTS

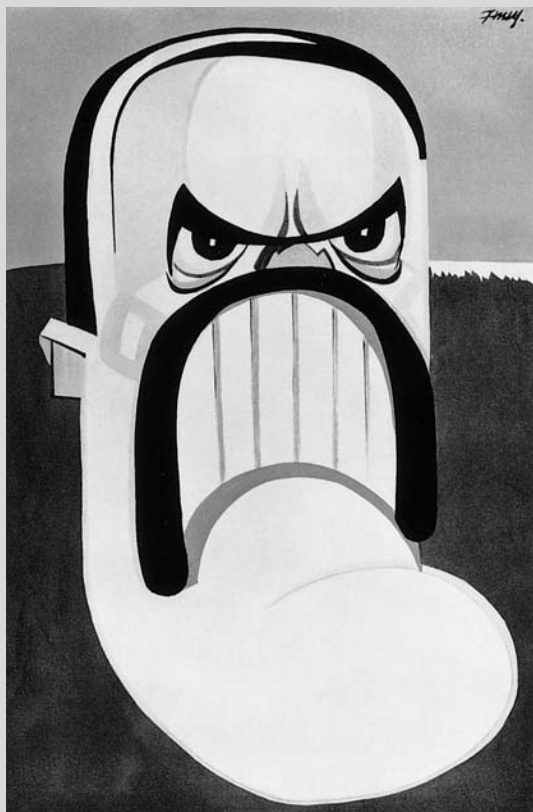


*'1917 REFUSE'. After the defeat of the second conscription referendum in 1917, Billy Hughes is consigned to the rubbish bin with another Labor 'rat', Joe Cook. (Claude Marquet, **Australian Worker**, 27 December 1917; National Library of Australia)*

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a distinctively Australian party system with the state Labor parties in the vanguard. It also saw the flowering of political art in news magazines and the daily press. Caricatures and cartoons, often accompanied by detailed captions, became a prominent and popular feature of newspapers and periodicals, providing wry comment on daily political manoeuvres and charting the rise and fall of public careers. These two developments, the birth of a new political culture and the arrival of cartoonists, were closely related. The political turmoil that accompanied the birth of parliamentary Labor provided rich pickings for cartoonists, whatever their political leanings. And the talent and vigour which these artists, from Norman Lindsay on the Right to Claude Marquet on the Left, brought to their work established a tradition that continues into the twenty-first century.

Political cartoonists are not mere commentators; they help form the 'political imagination' of voters in the way they present events and, particularly, players. The long careers of Billy Hughes and Jack Lang provide marvellous exemplars of the cartoonists' pervasive influence.

Diminutive, hyperactive, voluble, irascible, Billy Hughes spent 58 years in state and Federal Parliament, 24 of these as a founding member and driving force of the ALP. Hughes learned early to make use of the press in his contests with rivals and enemies. The 'newsworthiness' he sought ensured that he would become a favoured pictorial subject. The fortuitous combination of small stature, velocity, high volume and higher ambitions presented cartoonists with decades of opportunity. Throughout his seemingly interminable career, he was variously pictured as terrier (with can tied to tail), squalling baby (left on the doorstep of the anti-Labor parties),



Above: 'PREMIER OF NSW'. Jack Lang 'a metaphor for menace'. (George Finney, *Art in Australia*, 15 June 1931; National Library of Australia) Right: (Nestle Australia P/L)



Napoleon and—inevitably—rat. But, thanks to his insistent and very loud demands for a voice for Australia at the Versailles peace settlement and thereafter, the belligerent larrikin was also portrayed as a hero, the nation's very own 'Little Digger'. Vindictive, treacherous, vituperative, domineering, he was perhaps the kind of hero Australians like to have.

For three decades and more, Jack Lang was a gift to the cartoonist. He arrived in the New South Wales Parliament in 1913 as 'six feet of uncouth, untrained political pugnacity'; cartoonists were quick to take the cue. His dour countenance, bullying style and massive ego were quickly converted into an instantly recognised and

threatening image. Lang did not stay untrained for long. His growing confidence and political skill, his risk-taking and the relentless opposition of the majority of the press, made him a permanent focus for controversy. The demagogue whose rhetoric drew huge crowds, the belligerent populist whose impact on state and federal Labor would endure across two decades, would attract and hold the attention of black-and-white artists across the political spectrum. As his career moved from crisis to crisis and most political institutions were drawn into his orbit, Lang's visage became so familiar that by 1931 *Art in Australia* featured it as a visual metaphor for menace. Political art had transcended politics and become art.

A little later and with no gesture towards high art, Sweetacres used images of Hughes and Lang in full rant to proclaim 'It's moments like these you need MINTIES'.

John Iremonger

Government of September 1914 and the Curtin Government of October 1941 was stark testament to how division and defection had vitiated Labor's efforts. Surely, rats had earned the hatred of those who had remained true to the cause:

How now? A rat, a rat
in the Labour movement?
For your improvement
we should have watched you
harder
as Secretary and Chairman.
We should have kept a cat
with nine strong knotted
tails
to guard our Labour larder
and guard ourselves from
vermin.
But now at last we know
why so much effort fails.
The right road to go—
the Red road to tomorrow—
is the road that you veto:
and may it bring you sorrow
that you grew too proud and
fat
for the Proletariat,
you rat!¹⁷

Eddie Ward, himself an ex-rat, used far fewer words to express his sentiments when asked to attend a dinner to mark Hughes' 50 years of parliamentary service; he stated that he didn't eat cheese.¹⁸

The next great contest in Caucus (in which Ward would be deeply embroiled) would again split the Party, provide another source of support for its enemies, and thereby keep Labor out of office for almost two decades.

In 1923, within three years of the birth of the minuscule Australian Communist Party, the New South Wales ALP State Executive voted to expel communists from the Party, a vote confirmed within a year at State Conference and again at a Federal Conference where Queensland Premier Theodore described communists and ALP supporters as 'oil and water'.¹⁹ Communism had arrived. At issue was never competition for the electors; in its 60 years, the Communist Party won only one parliamentary seat—the state seat of Bowen in Queensland. Rather, the contest was for control of the trade unions and, through affiliated unions, Labor's party machine. Whatever the twists and turns of communist tactical doctrine—one year Labor supporters were 'social fascists' to be attacked with special venom, the next year fraternal allies in a popular front—seldom was the ALP less than extremely wary of communists and their influence.²⁰

This deep-seated suspicion was particularly evident in the aftermath of World War II and the opening years of the Cold War. By the time it lost office in 1949, the Chifley Government had enacted the *Approved Defence Projects Protection Act* to tighten security against communist unionists; amended the *Conciliation and Arbitration Act* to make it easier for anti-communist unionists to oust communist officials; successfully prosecuted two prominent communist officials for sedition; sent troops into New South Wales mines to break the communist-controlled Miners' Federation; and established the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO).²¹

But whatever the realities of the struggle between Labor and 'the commos', from 1920 onwards communism provided a potent weapon for conservatives in their contest with Labor. If all else might fail at the ballot box, then the menace of communism was deployed to maximise the non-Labor vote. In March 1951, after fifteen lacklustre months in office, Prime Minister Menzies sought to break Labor's control of the Senate by calling a double dissolution: 'Let us go to our masters, the Australian people, and ask them to say where they stand on the crucial issues of the Communist conspiracy . . .'²²

Senate obduracy necessitated the election but it was fought on the issue of communism. The ALP, whose Federal Executive had in September 1950 instructed the FPLP 'to avoid a double dissolution on the issue of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill',²³ was the target of a sustained campaign to convince voters that a vote for Australian Labor was a vote for international communism. Menzies was returned with a majority in both houses. The scare campaign had served its purposes, and delivered the victorious Coalition a bonus—the election result heightened the struggle that had been going on for many years within the labour movement.

In 1945, the year in which communist-controlled unions came close to having a majority at the ACTU biennial conference, the New South Wales branch officially sanctioned Industrial Groups to challenge communists within the unions. With Victoria the first to follow, these Groups were extended to other states and soon became predominantly Catholic organisations. The 24 men who comprised the first Caucus in 1901 were overwhelmingly Protestant or of no distinguishable religious persuasion. By the 1950s Catholics, largely excluded as leaders or members from the conservative parties, had adopted the ALP as the best expression of their political aspirations, provided half the rank and file, and became prominent in leadership positions. In the industrial wing of the labour movement, in competition for control of the unions, Catholics and communists became entrenched adversaries.

In no state branch was the contest between communists and Catholics more long-standing than in Victoria. In 1935 the Victorian State Executive expelled Maurice Blackburn for membership of the Movement Against War and Fascism, an organisation proscribed because among its members were communists and communist sympathisers. That same year, at Melbourne University, B. A. Santamaria began his long career as a political organiser and campaigner: for him, Mussolini's fascist Italy offered a preferable alternative to democracy; Franco's rebel army and the Falange were defenders of Christian Civilisation; and the Pope, with divine assistance, was the best judge of working men's and

'RED TED' AND 'STABBER JACK'

Image rights unavailable



Left: 'MR THEODORE'S ARRIVAL'. 'Red Ted' Theodore met by Frank Brennan at Essendon Airport. Theodore was travelling to Macedon to be sworn in by the Governor-General after being reinstated as Jim Scullin's Treasurer. (*Argus*, 31 January 1931; National Library of Australia)

Right: 'THE TREACHEROUS HAND THAT STRUCK THE FATAL BLOW'. Although 'Stabber Jack' and the Langites left Caucus in March 1931, they waited until November before moving to bring down the Scullin Government. (Will Donald, *Australian Worker*, 2 December 1931; National Library of Australia)

'Red Ted' Theodore arrived in Canberra in 1927 as a man in a hurry—a part he had played all his life. Founder of a militant miners' union at 22, he was a Labor member of the Queensland Parliament at 24, President of the state branch of the AWU at 28, Deputy Premier and Treasurer two years later, and Premier within four years. This was not mere place-getting; in each position he had fought major battles and won great change. (To thwart conservative opponents he abolished Queensland's upper house; his was

the only administration to have achieved this Labor objective.) Within two years of winning the New South Wales federal seat of Dalley, he was Deputy Leader.

Theodore's enemies were also in a hurry. Within a year of Theodore's arrival the Bruce-Page Government announced a royal commission into the circumstances surrounding his preselection for Dalley. Queensland's conservative government announced a royal commission into Theodore's dealings with the Mungana mines—three days before the October 1929 federal elec-

tion. Soon after, a Queensland Nationalist Senator (and Labor rat), Mathew Reid, resurrected allegations of a corrupt relationship with John Wren.

'Red Ted' survived both royal commissions and continued to shrug off allegations of corruption. But on his way to Canberra, in the two years between resigning the premiership and winning Dalley, he incurred the enmity of a far more powerful force—New South Wales Premier J. T. Lang. It was Lang's lieutenant in the federal Parliament, 'Stabber Jack' Beasley, who put paid to Theodore's political career. With the defeat of the Scullin Government after the Langites' defection, and his own defeat in Dalley by Langite Sol Rosevear (once his campaign manager), 'Red Ted' Theodore became E. G. Theodore, businessman. Lured by the prospect of cheap labour and a pliant colonial administration, the founder of a militant miners' union became an investor in Fiji gold mines.

Red Ted's nemesis was, like him, a man who had converted trade union experience into a parliamentary career. John Albert Beasley's stage had been the New South Wales Labor Council; he was President at the age of 27. A year later, in 1923, he was on the New South Wales ALP's State Executive. Five years later he was the federal Member for West Sydney, having journeyed from Jock Garden's 'Trades Hall Reds' to Lang's dominant faction.

Along the way Beasley had become a formidable political operator and an equally formidable opponent. On the election of the Scullin Government he was simultaneously leader of the Langite faction, Scullin's confidante and his youngest min-

ister; inevitably Theodore's rival. In March 1931, his support for the Lang Plan against Theodore's more realistic response to the Depression saw him leave the Cabinet and the Caucus. Eight months later he rose in the House of Representatives to do Jack Lang's bidding and take his revenge. His speech was a series of allegations about Theodore's corrupt use of unemployment relief funds to buy support within his electorate. With the help of seven Langites, the government was defeated on the floor of the House. Scullin went to the polls and Labor was routed.

'Stabber Jack' survived while 'Red Ted' lost his seat. Among the wreckage of the federal Party, the new Leader John Curtin recognised that the Lang faction could deny Labor government for the foreseeable future. Against the opposition of many in the Party, and particularly Ben Chifley who had fought Lang and his minions throughout his career, Curtin moved to neutralise Beasley and his followers in the only way possible: five years after handing government to Labor rat Joe Lyons, Beasley was back in the FLP. But Lang's grip on Beasley remained and in 1940 'Stabber Jack' again led a federal Lang party, this time called the ALP (Non-Communist). Curtin again negotiated the Langites' return to the fold.

It was worth it. The man who had destroyed a Labor government, ended one of the most promising careers in federal Labor history, who had ratted and reratted, proved to be a mainstay of the war effort and one of the reasons why the Curtin and Chifley Governments earn the right to be considered among Labor's finest.

John Iremonger

women's political needs.²⁴ A decade later, after a quiet war (thanks to exemption from military service arranged as a result of a petition from former Prime Minister Scullin, prompted by Archbishop Mannix and supported by Arthur Calwell), the youthful champion of fascism had become the centre of a concerted campaign to rid the unions and the ALP of communist influence:

He [Bert Cremean MLA, Deputy Leader of the Victorian Parliamentary Labor Party and brother of John, MHR for Hoddle 1949–56] suggested that I should approach Archbishop Mannix to discuss the Communist situation in the Australian Labour Movement . . . what Cremean was asking for was a kind of Catholic 'crusade' against Communism . . . one which would base itself on practical organization within the trade union movement.²⁵

Generalissimo Franco's admirer accepted the task with enthusiasm. The crusade would fight fire with fire:

The Communist organizational method has stood the test of effectiveness, and my proposal was that we should copy it . . . my thought was that the battle to defeat Communist power in the Labour Movement—whether in the Labor Party or the trade unions—should be essentially one of cadre against cadre, cell against cell, fraction against fraction.²⁶

The crusade became the Movement and the field of action soon expanded beyond the unions, where it made substantial gains through the Industrial Groups, into the FPLP. The vehicle for this expansion was a group of Victorians who joined the Caucus after the election in which the Chifley Government was defeated.

Stan Keon, Jack Mullens, Bill Bourke (Fawkner, Vic.), Robert Joshua, Jack Cremean, Tom Andrews, Bill Bryson: these men had many things in common. One collective attribute was sound Labor credentials. These were no parvenu agents of an external force; they knew they were as Labor as any of their Caucus colleagues, heirs and makers of a tradition that reached back to the anti-conscription battles of 1916. This deeply held conviction added a special savagery to their dealings with Caucus opponents. Veterans of internecine struggles in the trade unions, the Victorian branch and local government in Melbourne's suburbs, they had few qualms about 'taking on' fellow Caucus members. Six of the seven were also Catholics and a core of these, including Keon, Mullens and Andrews, lunched regularly with Santamaria;²⁷ all were eager to carry the crusade on to the floor of Caucus, and ready to use any means at their disposal to achieve their ends.

Their 'all or nothing' tactics were soon manifested, to the delight of the Menzies Government and the endless fascination of the press. In Caucus they formed the core of a permanent opposition, ensuring that every attempt to present a united voice would be attended by bitter conflict. Within a year of their arrival in Caucus, a weary and exasperated Chifley was to remark:

We could beat them yet by getting the [Federal] Executive to refer the question [the FPLP's response to the Communist Party Dissolution Bill] to Caucus, but you'd have a first-class split and all those mad buggers would know Caucus couldn't really give a binding decision.²⁸

In 1950 Chifley could see that the Groupers had begun the demolition of Caucus solidarity.

An early example captures the relentless divisiveness of their style. When Menzies introduced that Bill, after his government's re-election in 1951 with control of both Houses, the Federal Executive ruled in July that a 'yes' vote in the ensuing referendum would be '. . . in conflict with Federal Conference decisions and Labor Party Policy and on which account members of the Labor Party are required to oppose the Bill both in the Federal House of Parliament and throughout the country'.²⁹

With that mandate, Bert Evatt, elected unopposed as FPLP Leader a month earlier, campaigned vigorously for a 'no' vote in the referendum. But Caucus members defied the ruling, some by 'running dead', others—notably the Victorians with the support of the state branch—by publicly dissociating themselves from the campaign. Evatt's leading role in securing the 'no' vote was widely acknowledged but the Federal Executive felt it necessary to accompany its congratulations with a warning to Caucus:

While stressing the fundamental importance of Labor unity, we cannot allow to pass unnoticed the opposition to Labor policy from within the [labour] Movement, and sternly rebuke those guilty by issuing timely mention that this Executive will not in future tolerate such profound contempt for Federal Conference decisions and democratic principles.³⁰

Faced with obvious disregard of federal policy (but possibly mindful of the inter-war years in New South Wales when the rebel branch fought the FPLP at state and federal elections with catastrophic effect on Labor's ability to govern), the new Leader opted for conciliation. To no avail. The sole discernible result of his efforts to unify the Caucus by papering over differences was erosion of his authority.³¹

Intransigence within Caucus had twice required the Federal Executive to intervene, in October 1950 and again in July 1951—a sure sign of crumbling unity. Dissent spilled into the Parliament. Within two years of the Victorian group's arrival in Canberra, Jack Mullens and Reg Pollard were ready to trade blows on the floor of the chamber; in Caucus, verbal conflict veered perilously close to physical violence. These were circumstances ripe for exploitation by the government, and it needed this assistance. In 1953, after three-and-a-half years in office, the Coalition's Senate vote fell far short of Labor's and only one state was without a Labor government. Federal Labor's continuing electoral support suggests that, whatever it might think of communism, the electorate was prepared to judge the shenanigans of Keon, Mullens and company as an embarrassing sideshow.³²

Vladimir Petrov and his connections in ASIO were expected to change all that. In the 1954 election, conducted in the wake of his defection and while the subsequent royal commission was being managed with maximum publicity, Caucus dissidents again challenged Party solidarity, with Bill Bourke publicly attacking his Leader on the campaign trail, echoing Harold Holt's description of Labor's Leader as 'the most notable defender of communism in Australia'.

Yet despite the circumstances, the FPLP still gained seats and still polled over 50 per cent of the first-preference votes.

The judgement of the electors mattered nought to the zealots. Evatt's response to the Petrov Royal Commission—his complete and very public absorption in its proceedings and his persistent unwillingness to seek Caucus sanction for his role—presented the dissidents with their best opportunity to unseat him, for they were not alone in their alienation from his leadership or their trenchant criticism of his competence. Caucus solidarity was now a dim memory, as repeated attacks on Evatt's leadership were leaked to the press, and Evatt and his supporters responded by labelling his enemies 'paid informers' and 'treacherous liars'. On 20 October 1954, two weeks after Evatt had responded to continual goading with a press statement identifying his opponents as members of a group of infiltrators 'largely directed from outside the Labor Movement . . . The Melbourne *News Weekly* [Santamaria's mouthpiece] appears to act as their organ . . .', amid extraordinary scenes over a third of Caucus voted for a leadership spill.³³ But when Caucus met in April 1955, after the Federal Executive had intervened in Victoria and a newly constituted State Executive had expelled seven of Evatt's tormentors, only one Caucus member chose to follow the Victorians out of the Party. Not one of the Victorian rats survived the 1955 election.

Chifley's 'mad buggers' were gone. The fortunes of their offspring, the DLP, proved the limits of their vision and the narrowness of their appeal. But their five years in the FPLP severely wounded the Party. It would require the passing of many of those who had endured these years of division, and much incremental reform to confirm Caucus' capacity to manage its own affairs, before the FPLP was healthy enough to wrest government from its opponents.

Within sixteen months of the Whitlam Government taking office, it was forced to the polls by the Opposition decision to reject Supply. The pretext offered on 4 April 1974 was the circumstance in which Senator Vince Gair vacated his seat, but the real reason was patently different, as later acknowledged by the Opposition Leader, Billy Snedden: ' . . . there was a half Senate election due. We thought you might gain control of the Senate and get your redistribution through. Doug Anthony told me we had to do all in our power to prevent the distribution.'³⁴

Thanks to the fag-ends of the DLP, the first Whitlam Government could not command a majority in the upper house. The result of the May 1974 double dissolution was that the DLP was finally snuffed out and the Senate, with the conditional support for Labor of the independent Steele Hall, was tied. The Coalition was forced to await another opportunity to destroy the Labor Government.

The opportunity was created by Queensland's Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen. On the death of Labor Senator Bert Milliner (Qld), the Premier chose to defy the convention whereby the state Labor Party's nomination would be accepted by the state Parliament and fill the vacant position until the next Senate election. Instead, the Premier invited the state branch to nominate three candidates from which the Coalition-controlled state Parliament might choose.

The Queensland ALP Leader, Tom Burns, refused, offering one candidate only, a member of the Left faction, thereby returning one provocation with another. Burns was right in principle and wrong in precedent: in 1962 the state ALP had agreed to submit two names to replace a deceased senator and the state Parliament had chosen one of the two. Bjelke-Petersen responded by having the 'independent' (but openly anti-Whitlam) Albert Field replace Milliner. Labor had walked into a trap. Even without Field's participation, on the Supply issue the vote was 29 to 30 in favour of the Opposition. The way was now open for it to reject Supply again.³⁵

The Queensland branch nomination was Dr Malcolm Colston. His turn would come in December 1975 when he joined the Caucus as senator. Colston was to serve as a somewhat passive member of Caucus, distinguished solely by his willingness to serve on parliamentary committees and his progression from Left to Centre-Left to Right, until the early 1990s when, with retirement apparently in mind, he offered himself to successive Ministers for Territories in the Hawke and Keating Governments as a suitable Administrator of Norfolk Island. Each time, his offer was declined.³⁶

Factional deals kept Colston in the Senate through the defeat of the Keating Government. The Coalition won the March 1996 election but did not gain control of the Senate, the balance being held by the Democrats, the Greens and the lone independent, Senator Brian Harradine. A key element of the Howard Government's economic program was further privatisation, including Telstra, to which the Democrats had already signalled their opposition.

Within two months of the Coalition's victory, Harradine phoned the Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley, on behalf of a member of Caucus, regarding preferment: 'You people were given an opportunity one month ago, when I took it upon myself to try to notify you that you had a problem on your hands and that you ought to look at it and deal with it . . .'³⁷

Light was later shed on the 'problem' by a former member of Colston's staff in a police statement. It affirmed that the Senator, more than ten years before he left Parliament, had said that his career was going nowhere and he was out to get all he could from the system.³⁸

While he was using Harradine as an emissary to his own party, Colston began secret discussions with key government senators. By 20 August 1996 the Senator had defected from the ALP, his departure as silent and unspectacular as the rest of his performance as an FLP member. The 20 August Caucus Minutes noted that business in the Senate that day would include the election of the President and Deputy President; the Minutes of the next meeting (10 September) simply noted that Labor's strength in the Senate 'was now down to 28'.³⁹ In the interim, the 'independent' Senator had been elected by the government as Deputy President of the Senate. Three-and-a-half months later, on 5 December, Colston confirmed that the government had his vote to pass the Telstra Bill.

The details of the reasons for Colston's voyage from the Caucus, where he had found a haven for 21 years, to the shores of the Coalition remain hidden in the negotiations preceding his defection. But one clue to his motivation was revealed in his Question on Notice of 2 May 1996 (after the change of government), answered by the President of the Senate on 22 August: 'Have the

LEADING OR LOSING

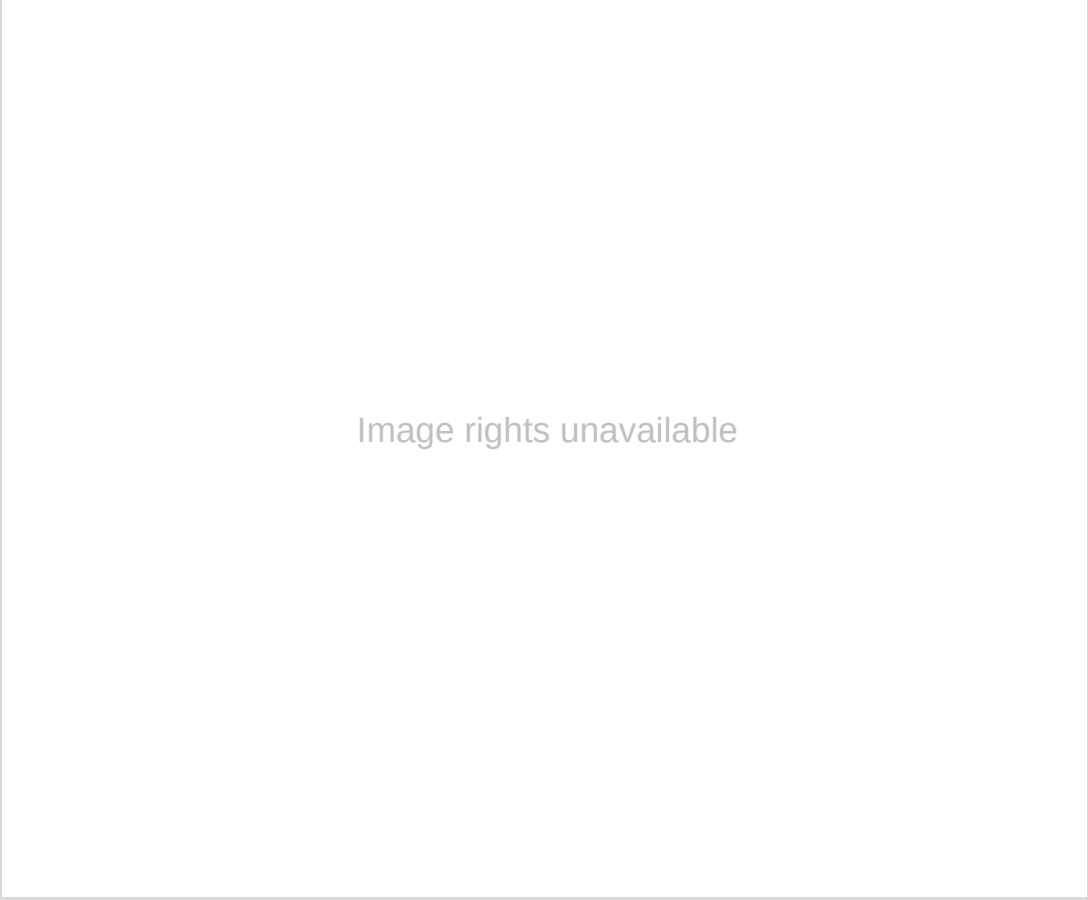


Image rights unavailable

John Curtin's tireless efforts to reunite Labor are reflected in this photograph. Curtin is speaking to an audience that includes an inscrutable Jack Lang (centre) and his acolyte 'Stabber Jack' Beasley. (Beasley Collection, National Archives of Australia)

John Curtin, newly and narrowly elected Leader of the Opposition, was well versed in the ways and costs of division. Four years earlier, as a first-term back-bencher, he had watched Prime Minister Scullin rule in Caucus that 'any member elected on any other policy than [that of] the Federal ALP cannot be a member of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party', only to have that ruling challenged. In the ensuing fracas, the Langite Jack Beasley led five others out of Caucus; newly

elected Eddie Ward followed. Later that same month, March 1931, at a special Federal Conference, Western Australian delegate Curtin moved the motion that expelled the Langite New South Wales branch. Expulsion was necessary, he argued, because 'the story of previous efforts at conciliation . . . was the story of continual humiliation for those endeavouring to maintain the solidarity of the movement'. Within the year, he watched 'Stabber Jack' Beasley cross the floor of

the House to join 'Honest Joe' Lyons in bringing down the Scullin Government; in the election following, Curtin lost his seat. Little wonder he was to label Lang and his followers 'cannibals'.

Yet five months into his term as Leader, the Caucus Minutes for 10 March 1936 record his 'sincere and cordial welcome' to Beasley's group with the 'earnest desire that the unity would be one of the heart as well as the letter'. Curtin had subordinated his justifiable loathing for the splitters, seized opportunities for rapprochement, bent his energies to healing rifts—and carried Caucus with him. Unity was all, the precondition to meet 'the immediate need . . . for the Opposition to be a real force . . .'. Curtin could do his sums: reconciliation increased the Opposition's numbers from 22 to 31; a show of unity made possible further gains at the next election—to 45—within striking distance of government.

Lang was to make one last assault on Federal Labor's solidarity, in 1940, again using Beasley. But this rift was to last barely ten months. Once again the Leader made the welcoming speech; the Caucus Minutes for 10 March 1941 record Curtin asserting that 'the welfare of working communities was inseparably bound up with . . . unity'. His purpose had not faltered. Labor was readying itself for office.

Bert Evatt, newly and unanimously (only the second since 1901 to be so blessed) elected Leader of the Opposition, had little direct experience of the perils of division. True, he had been a victim of Jack Lang 24 years before when his preselection for a state seat was thwarted. And true, on his arrival in Canberra, impatience for office led him to indulge in a little destabilising, even intimating to Prime Minister Menzies that a 'national government' might be a good idea. But once in office, his talents were fully engaged in gruelling

work as Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, work that increased his distance from Caucus.

So 'The Doc' came to lead the FPLP with few of the skills of his two predecessors. Two factors made his 'learning on the job' especially difficult. His personal style denied him the support of wise deputies and wise staff, able or willing to smooth his way. The second factor was the arrival of a force every bit as dangerous as the Langites had been. In the rising tensions of the Cold War, fanned by a Prime Minister mindful of a slim majority, the Groupers proved formidable opponents.

In 1951, Evatt tried appeasement, even seeking some common ground with B. A. Santamaria in an apparent attempt to strengthen his hand in dealing with the Left; it weakened his position in Caucus, reduced the Federal Executive's authority and failed to limit the Groupers' influence. After the establishment of the Petrov Royal Commission and the 1954 election loss, a hasty challenge to Evatt's leadership demonstrated that he had lost a quarter of his support. Emboldened, the Groupers attacked again in Caucus. Evatt chose to go public with a press statement denouncing fellow Caucus members and calling for help from the Federal Labor Conference. He had signalled his inability to contain the divisions within the FPLP. When another spill motion came before Caucus, on 20 October 1954, and amid uproar a division on the vote was demanded, over a third of Caucus declared their opposition to the Leader. Caucus was a broken shell, the fight had moved well beyond its authority, those who stood firm against the Groupers were divided in their loyalty to Evatt, the DLP was born. Due in part to Evatt's severe limitations as a manager of Caucus, the road back to office was to take a dozen years beyond his passing from the scene.

John Iremonger

views of the Privacy Commissioner been sought in relation to the tabling of travelling allowance payments to Senate chairs and members of committees; if not, will they be sought?'⁴⁰

The President of the Senate answered in the negative in accordance with 'the principle that there should be maximum disclosure of the entitlements received by parliamentarians'. There would be no refuge offered by the Privacy Commissioner. The lengths to which the government was prepared to go to shield Colston from accountability deserve a study in themselves but his defenders were not helped by such truth-telling as this, from the Usher of the Black Rod: 'It would appear, from the airline schedules, that Senator Colston was in one place when his travel allowance claim suggested he was in another.'⁴¹ Thanks to relentless pressure from the Opposition, led by Senators Faulkner, Ray and Carr (Vic.), Colston was eventually compelled to resign from the Deputy Presidency and forgo the \$16 000 p.a. that accompanied the honour. The campaign to force the government to divulge the extent of the Senator's creativity had paid dividends. A year later, and exactly two years after the Coalition's 1996 election victory, Colston was committed to stand trial in the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court on 28 charges of defrauding the Commonwealth pursuant to section 29D of the *Crimes Act*.⁴²

But although he was a defendant in a criminal trial, his utility to the government was by no means over. Having promised to 'neutralise' his Senate vote in the wake of the disclosure of the Senator's travel claims in April 1977, the Prime Minister did not stand in the way of Colston's return to the Senate on 20 April 1999 to vote for the GST, 'a tainted vote bought by John Howard and the Liberal Party'.⁴³ Six weeks later, Colston retired from Parliament.

Labor Leader Kim Beazley crisply summarised the Colston story:

He is in possession of politically stolen property—to wit, a vote of the Labor voters in Queensland for the Senate . . . Senator Colston has one responsibility and one responsibility only, and that is to vote the way the people who voted for him wanted him to vote, and that is with the Labor Party . . .⁴⁴

Senator Robert Ray, in relating the story to the traditions of the FLP, was characteristically more descriptive:

The fact is, if it is a matter of principle, there is nothing wrong with a Senator resigning from a political party in this place. The crime is staying here. If you are principled and if you do believe for some reason you no longer share the philosophy and views of your Party, you put a letter in to you, Madam President. You resign from this chamber and you go. You do not stay here for grubby venal reasons. You do not sell your services to the other side. That is a tradition of the Labor Party and anyone who rats on the Labor Party will get exactly what this quisling Quasimodo from Queensland got.⁴⁵

Ray's impassioned words confirm the tradition neatly depicted by the cartoonist Pryor in the *Canberra Times* on 21 August 1996, the day after Colston was elevated to the post of Deputy President of the Senate.



From Hughes to Colston. Were the rats wholly destructive? At the time, undoubtedly. But across a century, in testing the machinery of the Parliamentary Party to breaking point, they reaffirmed the founders' foresight, confirmed again and again Caucus' operational commitment to democratic practice, marked the capacity of the Caucus to change, and reinforced Labor's identity as a genuine alternative political organisation.

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APPENDICES

These appendices have been compiled using several sources: the Caucus Minutes for 1901–49, edited by Patrick Weller and Bev Lloyd and published in 1975; the unpublished Caucus Minutes for the post-1949 period; the Parliamentary Handbooks; and *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*. None of these sources provide a complete record of positions held in either the FPLP or the Parliament and, in some cases, contain contradictory information. In these circumstances the dates appearing in the Caucus Minutes have been used.

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OFFICERS OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

LEADER, FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

This position has always been held by the Leader in the House of Representatives. Frank Forde served as Acting Leader for eight days in July 1945 following the death of John Curtin.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
WATSON, John Christian	NSW	8/5/01–30/10/07
FISHER, Andrew	QLD	30/10/07–30/10/15
HUGHES, William Morris	NSW	30/10/15–14/11/16
TUDOR, Frank Gwynne	VIC	15/11/16–10/1/22 (died in office)
CHARLTON, Matthew	NSW	16/5/22–29/3/28
SCULLIN, James Henry	VIC	26/4/28–1/10/35
CURTIN, John Joseph Ambrose	WA	1/10/35–5/7/45 (died in office)
CHIFLEY, Joseph Benedict	NSW	12/7/45–13/6/51 (died in office)
EVATT, Herbert Vere	NSW	20/6/51–7/3/60
CALWELL, Arthur Augustus	VIC	7/3/60–8/2/67
WHITLAM, Edward Gough	NSW	8/2/67–22/12/77
HAYDEN, William George	QLD	22/12/77–3/2/83
HAWKE, Robert James Lee	VIC	3/2/83–19/12/91
KEATING, Paul John	NSW	19/12/91–19/3/96
BEAZLEY, Kim Christian	WA	19/3/96–

DEPUTY LEADER, FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

Prior to 1927 the Deputy Leader was usually the Leader in the Senate. The one exception was during the last thirteen months of Andrew Fisher's leadership when Billy Hughes filled the position. After 1927 the Deputy Leader was always in the House of Representatives.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
McGREGOR, Gregor ^a	SA	8/5/01–13/8/14 (died in office)
HUGHES, William Morris	NSW	18/9/14–30/10/15
PEARCE, George Foster ^a	WA	30/10/15–14/11/16
GARDINER, Albert ^a	NSW	15/11/16–30/6/26
SCULLIN, James Henry	VIC	3/3/27–26/4/28
BLAKELEY, Arthur	NSW	26/4/28–5/2/29
THEODORE, Edward Granville	NSW	5/2/29–19/12/31
FORDE, Francis Michael	QLD	16/2/32–28/9/46
EVATT, Herbert Vere	NSW	31/10/46–20/6/51
CALWELL, Arthur Augustus	VIC	20/6/51–7/3/60
WHITLAM, Edward Gough	NSW	7/3/60–8/2/67
BARNARD, Lance Herbert	TAS	8/2/67–10/6/74
CAIRNS, James Ford	VIC	11/6/74–14/7/75
CREAN, Frank	VIC	14/7/75–27/1/76
UREN, Thomas	NSW	27/1/76–22/12/77
BOWEN, Lionel Frost	NSW	22/12/77–4/4/90
KEATING, Paul John	NSW	4/4/90–3/6/91
HOWE, Brian Lee	VIC	3/6/91–20/6/95
BEAZLEY, Kim Christian	WA	20/6/95–19/3/96
EVANS, Gareth John	VIC	19/3/96–19/10/98
CREAN, Simon Findlay	VIC	19/10/98–

^a Also Leader in the Senate.

ASSISTANT LEADER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This position was established after Chris Watson submitted, then withdrew, his resignation from the leadership in July 1905. During Frank Tudor's leadership (1916–22) two temporary Assistant Leaders were chosen: W. G. Higgs in June 1918 while Tudor was in Western Australia, and M. Charlton in August 1920 while Tudor was ill.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
FISHER, Andrew	QLD	5/8/05–30/10/07
RYAN, Thomas Joseph	QLD	9/9/20–1/8/21 (died in office)
CHARLTON, Matthew	NSW	29/9/21–16/5/22
ANSTEY, Frank	VIC	16/5/22–3/3/27

LEADER, SENATE

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
McGREGOR, Gregor	SA	8/5/01–13/8/14 (died in office)
PEARCE, George Foster	WA	18/9/14–14/11/16
GARDINER, Albert	NSW	15/11/16–30/6/26
NEEDHAM, Edward	WA	1/7/26–30/6/29
DALY, John Joseph	SA	1/7/29–3/3/31
BARNES, John	VIC	3/3/31–30/6/35
COLLINGS, Joseph Silver	QLD	1/7/35–20/9/43
KEANE, Richard Valentine	VIC	20/9/43–26/4/46 (died in office)
ASHLEY, William Patrick	NSW	17/6/46–11/6/51
McKENNA, Nicholas Edward	TAS	11/6/51–17/8/66
WILLESEE, Donald Robert	WA	17/8/66–8/2/67
MURPHY, Lionel Keith	NSW	8/2/67–10/2/75
WRIEDT, Kenneth Shaw	TAS	10/2/75–25/9/80
BUTTON, John Norman	VIC	7/11/80–24/3/93
EVANS, Gareth John	VIC	24/3/93–6/2/96
FAULKNER, John Philip	NSW	19/3/96–

DEPUTY LEADER, SENATE

During the early years the filling of Senate positions other than the Leader had not been recorded in either the Caucus Minutes or *CPD*. It has not been possible to confirm if John Dooley held the position of Deputy Leader during the period October 1929 to February 1932.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
NEEDHAM, Edward	WA	10/6/25–1/7/26
GRANT, John	NSW	1/7/26–19/5/28 (died in office)
DALY, John Joseph	SA	21/3/29–30/6/29 (Assistant)
DOOLEY, John Braidwood	NSW	1/7/29–22/10/29 (Assistant)
DOOLEY, John Braidwood	NSW	14/2/32–31/8/32
O'HALLORAN, Michael Raphael	SA	31/8/32–20/6/35
BROWN, Gordon	QLD	23/9/35–20/9/38
KEANE, Richard Valentine	VIC	20/9/38–14/10/40
CUNNINGHAM, James	WA	14/10/40–1/7/41
KEANE, Richard Valentine	VIC	2/7/41–20/9/43
ASHLEY, William Patrick	NSW	20/9/43–17/6/46
CAMERON, Donald	VIC	17/6/46–31/10/46
McKENNA, Nicholas Edward	TAS	31/10/46–11/6/51
ARMSTRONG, John Ignatius	NSW	11/6/51–13/2/56
KENNELLY, Patrick John	VIC	13/2/56–8/2/67
COHEN, Samuel Herbert	VIC	8/2/67–7/10/69 (died in office)
WILLESEE, Donald Robert	WA	12/11/69–5/12/72
KEEFFE, James Bernard	QLD	27/1/76–31/5/77
McCLELLAND, Douglas	NSW	31/5/77–22/12/77
BUTTON, John Norman	VIC	22/12/77–7/11/80
GRIMES, Donald James	TAS	7/11/80–17/2/87
EVANS, Gareth John	VIC	17/2/87–24/3/93
RAY, Robert Francis	VIC	24/3/93–11/3/96
SHERRY, Nicholas John	TAS	19/3/96–7/10/97
COOK, Peter Francis Salmon	WA	21/10/97–

CHAIR, CAUCUS

This position was originally filled by the FPLP Leader. It was formalised as a separate position during the first Whitlam Government.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
BROWN, William Walter Charles	VIC	18/12/72–30/5/78
McAULIFFE, Ronald Edward	QLD	30/5/78–30/6/81
JENKINS, Henry Alfred	VIC	17/8/81–10/3/83
MILDREN, John Barry	VIC	10/3/83–22/7/87
BROWN, Robert James	NSW	22/7/87–23/8/88
CHYNOWETH, Robert Leslie	VIC	30/8/88–24/3/90
JAKOBSEN, Carolyn Anne	WA	3/4/90–23/3/93
SNOW, James Henry	NSW	23/3/93–19/3/96
MORRIS, Peter Frederick	NSW	19/3/96–19/10/98
CAMPBELL, George	NSW	19/10/98–

SECRETARY, CAUCUS

Caucus Minutes are missing for the period 1962–69 so it is not possible to provide the exact date on which Fred Birrell was elected to replace Jock Nelson, who retired on 31 October 1966.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
STEWART, James Charles	QLD	8/5/01–27/6/05
TUDOR, Frank Gwynne	VIC	27/6/05–13/11/08
WATKINS, David	NSW	13/11/08–13/6/17
CATTS, James Howard	NSW	13/6/17–25/2/20
BLAKELEY, Arthur	NSW	25/2/20–26/4/28
MAKIN, Norman John Oswald	SA	26/4/28–22/10/29
PRICE, John Lloyd	SA	22/10/29–12/3/31 (not replaced)
BLAKELEY, Arthur	NSW	16/2/32–22/10/34
MAKIN, Norman John Oswald	SA	22/10/34–6/10/41
MARTENS, George William	QLD	6/10/41–16/8/46
SHEEHAN, Thomas	NSW	31/10/46–26/3/55 (died in office)
FITZGERALD, Joseph Francis	NSW	18/4/55–10/12/55
NELSON, John Norman	NT	13/2/56–31/10/66
BIRRELL, Frederick Ronald	SA	1966–10/4/74
LAMB, Anthony Hamilton	VIC	10/6/74–13/12/75
JENKINS, Henry Alfred	VIC	27/1/76–30/5/78
MELZER, Jean Isobel	VIC	30/5/78–17/8/81
KELLY, Rosalyn Joan	ACT	17/8/81–22/7/87
FREE, Ross Vincent	NSW	22/7/87–3/4/90
CRAWFORD, Mary Catherine	QLD	3/4/90–23/3/93
WEST, Suzanne Margaret	NSW	23/3/93–

Christine Cannon

PARLIAMENTARY POSITIONS HELD BY MEMBERS OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

WHIP, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
TUDOR, Frank Gwynne	VIC	12/6/01–13/11/08
WATKINS, David	NSW	13/11/08–8/7/13
PAGE, James	QLD	8/7/13–3/6/21 (died in office)
FENTON, James Edward	VIC	21/7/21–22/10/29
RILEY, Edward Charles	NSW	22/10/29–15/9/34
LAWSON, George	QLD	22/10/34–6/10/41
CONELAN, William Patrick	QLD	6/10/41–20/9/43
SHEEHAN, Thomas	NSW	20/9/43–31/10/46
FULLER, Arthur Neiberding	NSW	31/10/46–10/12/49
DALY, Frederick Michael	NSW	21/2/50–13/2/56
DUTHIE, Gilbert William Arthur	TAS	13/2/56–19/12/72
HANSEN, Brendan Percival	QLD	19/12/72–11/4/74
NICHOLLS, Martin Henry	SA	9/7/74–9/3/77
JOHNSON, Leslie Royston	NSW	9/3/77–9/3/83
HUMPHREYS, Benjamin Charles	QLD	21/4/83–14/9/87
CUNNINGHAM, Barry Thomas	VIC	14/9/87–19/2/90
GEAR, George	WA	8/5/90–24/3/93
McLEAY, Leo Boyce	NSW	24/3/93–

WHIP, SENATE

Between 30 June 1920 and 1 July 1923 Albert Gardiner was the sole ALP member in the Senate.

As with the Senate Deputy Leader, the filling of this position was often not recorded in either the Caucus Minutes or *CPD*. It has not been possible to establish who was Whip during the period August 1937 to September 1938.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
STEWART, James Charles	QLD	12/6/01–27/6/05
O'KEEFE, David John	TAS	27/6/05–19/2/07
DE LARGIE, Hugh	WA	19/2/07–18/9/14
READY, Rudolph Keith	TAS	18/9/14–1/3/17
NEEDHAM, Edward	WA	8/3/17–30/6/20
McHUGH, Charles Stephen	SA	1/7/23–24/7/27
GRAHAM, Charles Montague	WA	24/7/27–30/6/29
HOARE, Albert Alfred	SA	1/7/29–22/10/29
DUNN, James Patrick	NSW	22/10/29–12/3/31
HOARE, Albert Alfred	SA	12/3/31–30/6/35
McDONALD, John Valentine	QLD	23/9/35–17/8/37 (died in office)
ASHLEY, William Patrick	NSW	20/9/38–6/10/41
CLOTHIER, Robert Ernest	WA	6/10/41–30/6/50
CRITCHLEY, John Owen	SA	1/7/50–4/9/57
O'FLAHERTY, Sidney Wainman	SA	4/9/57–19/2/62
O'BYRNE, Justin Hilary	TAS	19/2/62–11/4/74
POYSER, Arthur George	VIC	9/7/74–11/11/75
GEORGES, George	QLD	27/1/76–23/11/80
ROBERTSON, Edward Albert	NT	24/11/80–5/6/87
JONES, Gerry Norman	QLD	14/9/87–11/3/96
EVANS, Christopher Vaughan	WA	20/3/96–19/10/98
O'BRIEN, Kerry Williams Kelso	TAS	19/10/98–

SPEAKER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
McDONALD, Charles	QLD	1/7/10–8/7/13 8/10/14–13/6/17
MAKIN, Norman John Oswald	SA	20/11/29–16/2/32
ROSEVEAR, John Solomon	NSW	22/6/43–21/2/50
COPE, James Francis	NSW	27/2/73–27/2/75
SCHOLES, Gordon Glen Denton	VIC	27/2/75–11/11/75
JENKINS, Henry Alfred	VIC	22/4/83–11/2/86
CHILD, Gloria Joan Liles	VIC	11/2/86–28/8/89
McLEAY, Leo Boyce	NSW	29/8/89–8/2/93
MARTIN, Stephen Paul	NSW	4/5/93–29/1/96

DEPUTY SPEAKER/CHAIR OF COMMITTEES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The title was changed from Chair of Committees to Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees on 3 November 1992 and then to Deputy Speaker on 21 February 1994.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
McDONALD, Charles	QLD	20/6/06–5/11/06 10/7/07–19/2/10
POYNTON, Alexander	SA	1/7/10–23/4/13
CHANTER, John Moore	NSW	9/10/14–26/3/17
McGRATH, David Charles	VIC	20/11/29–27/11/31
RIORDAN, William James Frederick	QLD	22/6/43–16/8/46
CLARK, Joseph James	NSW	7/11/46–31/10/49
SCHOLES, Gordon Glen Denton	VIC	28/2/73–27/2/75
BERINSON, Joseph Max	WA	27/2/75–14/7/75
JENKINS, Henry Alfred	VIC	19/8/75–11/11/75
JOHNSON, Leslie Royston	NSW	21/4/83–19/12/83
CHILD, Gloria Joan Liles	VIC	28/2/84–11/2/86
McLEAY, Leo Boyce	NSW	11/2/86–29/8/89
EDWARDS, Ronald Frederick	WA	29/8/89–8/2/93
JENKINS, Henry Alfred	VIC	4/5/93–29/1/96

PRESIDENT, SENATE

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
TURLEY, Joseph Henry Lewis	QLD	1/7/10–8/7/13
GIVENS, Thomas	QLD	9/7/13–14/11/17
CUNNINGHAM, James	WA	1/7/41–4/7/43
BROWN, Gordon	QLD	23/9/43–19/3/51
O'BYRNE, Justin Hilary	TAS	9/7/74–11/11/75
McCLELLAND, Douglas	NSW	21/4/83–23/1/87
SIBRAA, Kerry Walter	NSW	17/2/87–31/1/94
BEAHAN, Michael Eamon	WA	1/2/94–30/6/96

DEPUTY PRESIDENT/CHAIR OF COMMITTEES, SENATE

The title was changed from Chair of Committees to Deputy President and Chair of Committees on 22 October 1981.

<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Date</i>
HIGGS, William Guy	QLD	16/3/04–31/12/06
PEARCE, George Foster	WA	21/2/07–13/11/08
O'KEEFE, David John	TAS	1/7/10–30/7/14
HENDERSON, George	WA	9/10/14–30/6/17
BROWN, Gordon	QLD	1/7/41–23/9/43
COURTICE, Benjamin	QLD	23/9/43–1/11/46
NICHOLLS, Theophilus Martin	SA	6/11/46–19/3/51
McCLELLAND, Douglas	NSW	20/8/81–4/2/83
COLSTON, Malcolm Arthur	QLD	21/8/90–17/8/93
WEST, Suzanne Margaret	NSW	6/5/97–

Christine Cannon

NOTES

FOREWORD

- 1 Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 1999, p. 101.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The term 'caucus' has a history in Australian political terminology that predates the formation of the FLP. The first recorded usage by federal Labor members was on 3 July 1901 when they discussed what would constitute a 'quorum of caucus'. See Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949. Volume 1, 1901–1917*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 54.
- 2 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 44.
- 3 The exception to this was the Governor-General's appointment of Frank Forde as Labor Prime Minister for eight days following the death of John Curtin in 1945.
- 4 This figure includes the Labor members who held the seats of the Northern Territory between 1922 and 1968 and the Australian Capital Territory between

1948 and 1966 when these seats had limited voting rights in the House of Representatives. Despite this, these members had full voting rights within Caucus.

- 5 Stephen Martin, 'Labor and Financial Deregulation: The Hawke/Keating Governments, Banking and New Labor', unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Economics and Department of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, December 1999, Table 1.
- 6 Frank C. Green, *Servant of the House*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1969, p. 97.

1 THE ORIGINS OF CAUCUS

- 1 Edmund Burke, 'To the Electors of Bristol', in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol. II, Oxford University Press, London, 1924, p. 165.
- 2 Vere Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, F. B. Smith (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964 (first published 1923), especially chapters 1–4.
- 3 Burke, 'Electors of Bristol', p. 164.
- 4 *Australian Workman*, 18 November 1893.
- 5 P. Loveday and A. W. Martin, *Parliament*

- Factions and Parties: The First Thirty Years of Responsible Government in New South Wales, 1856–1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1966, pp. 5, 53.
- 6 Loveday and Martin, *Parliament*, pp. 53, 55.
 - 7 Joy Parnaby, 'The Economic and Political Development of Victoria, 1877–1881', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1951, p. 255.
 - 8 Noel G. Butlin, 'Colonial socialism in Australia, 1860–1900', in Hugh G. Aitken (ed.), *The State and Economic Growth*, Social Science Research Council, New York, 1959, p. 38.
 - 9 Stuart Macintyre, *Winners and Losers: The Pursuit of Social Justice in Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1985, p. 47.
 - 10 C. J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855–1889', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1973, pp. 90–5 and chapter 7. Serle's comment: Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851–1861*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1977, p. 289.
 - 11 Bede Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Beginnings of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1989, chapter 1; Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 10.
 - 12 Celestina Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party, 1885–1894', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984, pp. 53–61; Kellaway, 'Melbourne', pp. 358–61.
 - 13 Kellaway, 'Melbourne', pp. 376–8.
 - 14 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 9, 10.
 - 15 D. J. Murphy, 'Queensland', in D. J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880–1920*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1975, pp. 131, 135, 137. For Glassey, see S. A. Rayner, 'Thomas Glassey—First Labour Member', in D. J. Murphy, R. B. Joyce and Colin A. Hughes (eds), *Prelude to Power: The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885–1915*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton, Qld, 1970, pp. 194–8.
 - 16 L. F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901–1951*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1955, p. 113.
 - 17 George Black, quoted in McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 15.
 - 18 Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, p. 74.
 - 19 Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, chapters 5–7; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880–1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, chapter 6.
 - 20 Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, chapter 8.
 - 21 *Australian Workman*, 11, 18 November 1893.
 - 22 *Worker* (Sydney), December 1893 (vol. 3, no. 10). The precise date of this issue is unclear.
 - 23 See also *Worker* (Sydney), 17 March 1894.
 - 24 Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, chapters 9–10; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, chapter 6. The quotation from Markey, p. 185.
 - 25 Colm Kiernan, 'Home Rule for Ireland and the formation of the Australian Labor Party, 1883–1891', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1992, pp. 1–11. See also Murphy, 'Queensland', p. 156.
 - 26 Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and His Party 1880–90*, Clarendon Press, London, 1957, p. 143.
 - 27 For Labor in Victoria, see Frank Bongiorno, *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition, 1875–1914*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996.
 - 28 Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, p. 303.
 - 29 *Tocsin*, 2 October 1897.
 - 30 *Tocsin*, 17 March, 27 October, 10 November 1898.
 - 31 *Tocsin*, 7 December 1899; John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890–1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, p. 120.
 - 32 The discussion in this paragraph depends mainly on J. B. Dalton, 'An interpretative survey: The Queensland labour movement', in Murphy, Joyce and Hughes (eds), *Prelude*, pp. 3–16; Murphy, 'Queensland', pp. 129–67; and R. B. Joyce, 'Queensland', in P. Loveday, A. W. Martin and R. S. Parker (eds), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, pp. 117–43.
 - 33 D. J. Murphy, 'The changing structure of

- the Party', in Murphy, Joyce and Hughes (eds), *Prelude*, p. 92.
- 34 *Worker* (Brisbane), 20 August 1892.
 - 35 Joyce, 'Queensland', p. 122.
 - 36 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 27; *Worker* (Brisbane), 11 June 1898; *Courier*, 11 June 1898.
 - 37 Murphy, 'Queensland', p. 170; Joyce, 'Queensland', pp. 136, 140.
 - 38 D. Jaensch, 'South Australia', in Loveday, Martin and Parker (eds), *The emergence of the Australian party system*, p. 252.
 - 39 Louise Overacker, *The Australian Party System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1952, p. 74.
 - 40 The foregoing discussion depends on Jaensch, 'South Australia', pp. 251–63; Dickey, 'South Australia', in Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, pp. 231–51.
 - 41 *Age*, 23 November 1895.
 - 42 Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, p. 75. See also George Black, *The Labor Party in New South Wales: A History from Its Formation in 1891 until 1904*, Worker Trades Union Printery, Sydney, n.d. [c. 1904] for details of the first Labor Caucus in New South Wales.
 - 43 *Commonweal*, 14 May 1892.
 - 44 *Age*, 1 July 1898; *Argus*, 1 July 1898.
 - 45 *Commonweal*, 26 November 1892.
 - 46 *Age*, 16 August 1894.
 - 47 *Age*, 16, 18 August 1894.
 - 48 *Tocsin*, 7 July 1898.
 - 49 Trades Hall Council (THC), Minutes, 6 October 1899, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, M14.
 - 50 P. Loveday, 'The federal parties', in Loveday, Martin and Parker (eds), *The Emergence of the Australian Party*, pp. 388–9; Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour Party*, pp. 25–6.
 - 51 H. J. Gibbney, 'Western Australia', in Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, p. 347.
 - 52 *Tocsin*, 8 February, 15 March 1900; *Argus*, 17 February 1900; *Age*, 26 January 1900. The initiative and referendum plank of the Platform allowed proposed measures to be put to referenda.
 - 53 THC, Minutes, 9 March 1900.
 - 54 *Argus*, 24 February 1900.
 - 55 The responses of South Australia and Queensland to the pledge are unclear.
 - 56 THC, Minutes, 9 March 1900. The proposal, with slightly different wording,

appears in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1900.

2 THE FIRST CAUCUS

- 1 *Worker* (Sydney), 2 September 1899.
- 2 *Worker* (Sydney), 8 February 1900.
- 3 See Frank Bongiorno, 'The origins of Caucus 1856–1901' in this volume.
- 4 L. F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labor Party 1901–1951*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1955, p. 261.
- 5 Quoted in Bongiorno, 'Origins', p. 6.
- 6 Raymond Postgate, *Life of George Lansbury*, Longman, Green and Co., London, 1951, p. 25, quoted in L. F. Fitzhardinge, *That Fiery Particle 1862–1914: William Morris Hughes, A Political Biography, Volume 1*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1964, p. 13.
- 7 Except where otherwise indicated, biographical details are taken from Joan Rydon, *A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament 1901–1972*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1975 and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
- 8 Al Grassby and Silvia Ordonez, *The Man That Time Forgot: The Life and Times of John Christian Watson, Australia's First Prime Minister*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1999.
- 9 W. G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1909, p. 78.
- 10 William Guthrie Spence, *The Ethics of New Unionism*, Martin and Grose, Creswick, 1892, quoted in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, p. 169.
- 11 Quoted in Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia: Volume 4, 1901–1942, The Succeeding Age*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 10.
- 12 Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p. 78.
- 13 William Morris Hughes, *Crusts and Crusades: Tales of Bygone Days*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1947, p. 113, quoted in Fitzhardinge, *That Fiery Particle*, p. 53.
- 14 L. F. Crisp, "'Remember the literature, Comrades!'" Labor Party reading then and now', *Labour History*, no. 36, May 1979, pp. 31–8.

3 LEADING THE WORLD

- 1 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 22 May 1901, p. 131.
- 2 Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949. Volume 1, 1901–1917*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 126.
- 3 J. A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965, vol. 2, p. 368.
- 4 Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, p. 131.
- 5 Nettie Palmer, *Henry Bournes Higgins*, Harrap, London, 1931, p. 177.
- 6 Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 58.
- 7 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 60.
- 8 La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, vol. 2, p. 420.
- 9 1908 Federal Conference Report, Brisbane, 1908, p. 27.
- 10 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 224.
- 11 W. G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1909, p. 264.
- 12 Enid Lyons, *So We Take Comfort*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1965, p. 171.
- 13 Chris Cunneen, *King's Men*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983, p. 114.
- 14 L. F. Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger 1914–52: William Morris Hughes, A Political Biography, Volume 2*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979, p. 6.
- 15 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 94.
- 16 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 95.
- 17 A. Gardiner to A. Fisher, 14 February 1916, Fisher papers, National Library of Australia.
- 18 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 14 September 1916, pp. 8558–61.
- 19 W. Hughes to A. Fisher, 26 October 1916, Fisher papers, National Library of Australia.
- 20 Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, p. 214.
- 21 E. Russell to A. Fisher, 14 October 1916, Fisher papers, National Library of Australia.

4 BACK FROM THE BRINK

- 1 David O'Keefe (Denison, Tas.) and Senator James Ogden were elected in the general election on 16 December 1922.

Ogden took his seat in the Senate on 1 July 1923.

- 2 Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949. Volume 2, 1917–1931*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 7–8.
- 3 N. Makin, 'Frank G. Tudor. Labour Leader 1916–1922', chapter in unpublished typescript, 'Fifty Years of Labor Leadership (1901–1951)', by the Hon. Norman Makin, MHR for Bonython, South Australia. A copy of the typescript is held among papers at the ALP Centre, Beaufort Street, Perth.
- 4 Makin, 'Frank Tudor'.
- 5 Makin, 'Frank Tudor'; Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 120.
- 6 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 120–3.
- 7 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 136–7.
- 8 See Hugh Mahon Papers, NLA Accession No. MS 937, series 8, items 649–698; *Argus*, 12 November 1920; *Tribune*, 18 November 1920.
- 9 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 140, 144, 154.
- 10 Jim Hagan and Ken Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891–1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p. 76.
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- 12 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 154.
- 13 Makin, 'Matthew Charlton', chapter in unpublished typescript, 'Fifty Years of Labor Leadership'.
- 14 Cited in Makin, 'Matthew Charlton'.
- 15 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 143.
- 16 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 120–4; Makin, 'Matthew Charlton'; Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 300, 306.
- 17 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 304–5.
- 18 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 110.
- 19 Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 4, 1901–1942: The Succeeding Age*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 241.
- 20 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 212–14.
- 21 Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, pp. 203–4.
- 22 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 143; B. Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Aus-*

- tralia. The Social and Political Impact of the Great War 1914–1926*, UWA Press, Nedlands, WA, 1995, pp. 253ff.
- 23 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 253ff.
 - 24 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* vol. 112, pp. 875ff, 1617, 1644.
 - 25 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 113, p. 2540.
 - 26 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 113, p. 2170.
 - 27 *Argus*, 7 June 1926, cited in A. Wildavsky, *The 1926 Referendum*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1958, p. 18.
 - 28 Mahony's ideas can be gained from *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 113, pp. 2843–6.
 - 29 The argument about the impartial tribunal is from the 'The Vote No' and also from John Curtin's editorial in the *Westralian Worker*, 25 June 1926.
 - 30 These arguments are expressed in pamphlets such as 'The Vote No', and 'Be a BIG Australian. Vote Yes Twice'. Examples are found in Correspondence of the WA State Executive of the ALP, J. S. Battye Library Accession no. 1688A, file 266. See also Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 258ff for Caucus deliberations.
 - 31 See also McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 156.
 - 32 Dean Jaensch and C. A. Hughes, 'Politics', Table POL 29–37, 'National Referendums, Australia 1906–1977' in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians. Historical Statistics*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, p. 396.
 - 33 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 329, 331; *Westralian Worker*, 21 September 1928, p. 1.
 - 34 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 11.
 - 35 Hagan and Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales*, p. 80.
 - 36 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 120, 1929, pp. 277–8.
 - 37 Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, pp. 245, 247–50.
- 5 THE GROWTH OF FEDERAL AUTHORITY
- 1 T. H. Irving, 'The roots of parliamentary socialism', *Labour History*, no. 67, November 1994, pp. 97–109.
 - 2 Three Queensland senators elected in 1931 joined the Caucus in July 1932.
 - 3 Patrick Weller, *Caucus Minutes, 1901–1949. Volume 3, 1932–1949*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 147.
 - 4 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 172, 181–3.
 - 5 Vere Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, F. B. Smith (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964 (first published 1923), chapter 1.
 - 6 Of those on one ticket but not both, Jack Beasley (West Sydney, NSW) on the NSW ticket and James Fenton (Maribyrnong, Vic.) on the AWU ticket were elected. Two ministers not on either ticket were also elected: Anstey and Albert Green (Kalgoorlie, WA). Curtin was the only member on both tickets who missed out. See Patrick Weller, *Caucus Minutes, Volume 2, 1917–1931, 1901–1917*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 349.
 - 7 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 1930.
 - 8 Warren Denning, *Caucus Crisis: The Rise and Fall of the Scullin Government*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982 (first published 1937) captures the mood well.
 - 9 Frank Anstey, 'The Scullin Labor Government, 1929–1932', *Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 72, April 1979, p. 368.
 - 10 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 June 1930.
 - 11 Don Whittington, *The House Will Divide: A Review of Australian Federal Politics*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1969 (first published 1954), p. 29.
 - 12 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1930.
 - 13 Ross Fitzgerald, *'Red Ted': The Life of E. G. Theodore*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 281.
 - 14 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1930.
 - 15 Anstey, 'The Scullin Labor Government', p. 381.
 - 16 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1930.
 - 17 The original members of the Beasley group (all from New South Wales) were J. C. Eldridge, R. James, H. P. Lazzarini, E. J. Ward and Senators James Dunn and Arthur Rae.
 - 18 John Robertson, *J. H. Scullin: A Political Biography*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1974, p. 302.
 - 19 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14, 20, 21 January 1931.
 - 20 Robertson, *J. H. Scullin*, p. 343.
 - 21 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 433–4.
 - 22 Don Whittington, *Ring the Bells: A Dic-*

- tionary of Australian Federal Politics, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1956, p. 17.
- 23 During previous Labor governments an executive had been elected. See the appendices to Weller, *Caucus Minutes, Volume 1*.
 - 24 David Day, *John Curtin: A Life*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1999, pp. 341–2, seems unaware of contemporary political interpretations.
 - 25 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1935; *Argus*, 2 October 1935; Whittington, *Ring the Bells*, p. 58.
 - 26 Day, *John Curtin*, p. 344
 - 27 Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 188.
 - 28 Curtin was similarly insistent that the ACTU, or meetings of trade unionists, could not bind Caucus members; see Weller, *Caucus Minutes, Volume 3*, p. 208.
 - 29 L. F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901–1951*, Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd, Sydney, 1955, p. 138–9.
 - 30 Beasley's followers were: Rosevear, Mulcahy, Sheehan, Gander, and Senators Armstrong and Armour.
 - 31 Susan Blackburn, *Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labor Party, 1934–1943: A Study of Principle in Politics*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Melbourne, 1969, p. 49.
 - 32 Day, *John Curtin*, pp. 382–3.
 - 33 Curtin's address at Sydney University, 30 November 1939, quoted in L. Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1977, p. 184.
 - 5 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 275.
 - 6 Day, *John Curtin*, p. 413.
 - 7 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 294.
 - 8 Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 213.
 - 9 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 297.
 - 10 Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1942–1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1970, p. 334.
 - 11 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p. 334.
 - 12 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 223.
 - 13 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 217.
 - 14 Clem Lloyd and Richard Hall (eds), *Back-room Briefings—John Curtin's War*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1997, pp. 105–6.
 - 15 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p. 337.
 - 16 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p. 349.
 - 17 John Robertson, *Australia at War 1939–1945*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1981, p. 147.
 - 18 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 313.
 - 19 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 228.
 - 20 Leslie Haylen, *Twenty Years Hard Labor*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1969, p. 39.
 - 21 *Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 1944.
 - 22 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 334.
 - 23 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 1944.
 - 24 Weller, *Caucus Minutes* on dates cited in text.
 - 25 L. F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley—A Political Biography*, Angus & Robertson, London, 1977, p. 236.
 - 26 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 236.
 - 27 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1946.
 - 28 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 393.
 - 29 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 November 1946.
 - 30 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 205 (note).
 - 31 Patrick Weller and Beverley Lloyd (eds), *Federal Executive Minutes 1915–1955: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Executive of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 330–1.
 - 32 Confirmed by the Federal Executive on 12 May 1947. See Weller and Lloyd, *Federal Executive Minutes*, pp. 341–2.
 - 33 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 210.

6 VICTORY TO DEFEAT

- 1 David Day, *John Curtin: A life*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1999, p. 93.
- 2 Beasley, Rosevear, Mulcahy, Sheehan, Amour (Senator, NSW) and Armstrong were invited to rejoin federal Caucus after agreeing to conditions for unity with the New South Wales branch.
- 3 Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901–1949, Volume 3, 1932–1949*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 258–66.
- 4 A. W. Martin, *Robert Menzies—A Life: 1894–1943 Volume One*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 361.

- 34 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 435–6.
- 35 A. W. Martin, *Robert Menzies—A Life: 1944–1978, Volume Two*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p. 70.
- 36 Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p. 440.
- 37 This figure of 121 refers to the number of full members following the enlargement of the House of Representatives in 1949. The enlargement saw the establishment of a seat for the Australian Capital Territory with the same limited voting rights accorded to the Northern Territory. Each Territory elected one member, who was allowed to vote only on issues that affected their respective Territory.
- 38 Phillip Deery (ed.), *Labour in Conflict—The 1949 Coal Strike*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1978, p. 50.
- 39 David Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948–1954*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 23.

7 CRISIS TO CRISIS

- 1 Duplicates of the Federal Caucus Minutes are held in the Arthur Calwell Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 4738, Series 7. Chifley's contribution is from Federal Caucus Minutes, 21 February 1950, p. 58.
- 2 Federal Caucus Minutes, 15 March 1950, p. 61.
- 3 Federal Caucus Minutes, 7, 14 June 1950, p. 69.
- 4 Federal Caucus Minutes, 27 September 1950, p. 73.
- 5 The Federal Executive's decision was received by federal Caucus and incorporated into the Minutes in Federal Caucus Minutes, 18 October 1950, pp. 75–6.
- 6 Rev. Gil Duthie, 25 October 1950, Gil Duthie Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 7076, Box 1, Diary Volume 2.
- 7 Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 263.
- 8 Ferguson's attack was in an address to the NSW Fabian Society, see 'President Ferguson was slashing at his own Party', *News-Weekly*, 19 September 1951, p. 2. For counter-motions concerning Industrial Groups and Executive conflict, see Sean Scalmer, 'The affluent worker or the divided party? Explaining the transformation of the ALP in the 1950s', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 3, December 1997, pp. 409–10. The Federal Secretary's warning on press statements is in P. J. Kennelly, 'Points for forthcoming federal elections', Item 13 of Agenda Paper, Federal Executive Minutes, 25 September 1950, p. 2. These minutes are contained in Australian Labor Party Federal Secretariat Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 4985, Series 2, Box 2. The opposition to parliamentarians on executives or as Federal Secretary is evident in 'A.L.P. groups win out in New South Wales', *News-Weekly*, 11 June 1952, p. 1, and 'The issues in the Kennelly Affair', *News-Weekly*, 22 July 1953, p. 1.
- 9 This account is drawn from: 'In Parliament, there were hot words over two Australian Haw-Haws', *News-Weekly*, 28 November 1951, p. 2, and Rev. Gil Duthie, 21 November 1951.
- 10 J. B. Chifley, 'Political testament', in *The Things Worth Fighting For*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1952, p. 386.
- 11 Evatt's strategy at this time is detailed in: 'Australia: Labour moves right', *Round Table*, no. 174, March 1954, pp. 204–10. For his praise of arbitration, industrial groups and land settlement, see 'Evatt moves for unity in labour movement', *News-Weekly*, 16 April 1952, p. 1, and 'Evatt gives positive policy for Labor Party', *News-Weekly*, 12 November 1952, p. 2. On contact with Santamaria and campaigning for Industrial Groups in elections, see Ken Buckley, Barbara Dale and Wayne Reynolds, *Doc Evatt: Patriot, Internationalist, Fighter and Scholar*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 384–5. An example of a left response to Evatt's reorientation was a speech by Clyde Cameron re-emphasising nationalisation: 'Speech causes Labor split', *Herald* (Melbourne), 13 November 1953.
- 12 Rev. Gil Duthie, 12 November 1953.
- 13 Complaints of lack of consultation and poor policy formulation by Evatt include: Peters in Federal Caucus Minutes, 6 March 1951, p. 81; Bourke in Federal Caucus Minutes, 23 September 1953,

- p. 15. Reports of complaints in Party meetings are noted in 'Australia: Conflict in the Labour Party', *Round Table*, no. 178, March 1955, p. 191. Criticisms of lack of consultation made in *News-Weekly* include 'Evatt's frantic bid to hold power', *News-Weekly*, 13 October 1954, p. 1, and 'Evatt scams Labor colleagues in TV application', *News-Weekly*, 12 January 1955, p. 3. The Federal Executive's complaint is 'Item 11', Federal Executive Minutes, 12 July 1954, Australian Labor Party Federal Secretariat Papers, MS 4985, Series 2, Box 2, p. 3. For the leadership challenge, see Federal Caucus Minutes, 3 August 1954, p. 25.
- 14 On Caucus dissent in August and early September, see Federal Caucus Minutes, 25 August 1954, p. 28, and McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 274–5. The three references to Party leakages are in Federal Caucus Minutes, 1, 15, 22, September 1954, pp. 31, 32, 33.
- 15 Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970, pp 178–81.
- 16 The novel role of the Federal Executive in the drafting of the policy speech is registered in Federal Executive Minutes, 31 October 1955. For public statements on bank nationalisation, see R. May, 'Political review', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3, September 1961, p. 103; on leadership, Federal Executive Minutes, 26 August 1957; on the DLP, L. C. Webb, 'Political review', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 1, March 1959, p. 99. The disciplining of Chambers and Johnson is emphasised in 'Federal Executive Report to 23rd Federal Conference, Canberra, 11th May 1959', Australian Labor Party Federal Secretariat Papers, MS 4985, Box 123, pp. 1–2. The record of attendance for Caucus meetings is requested in Federal Executive Minutes, 6 March 1957. The history of the establishment of the Standing Committees is surveyed in K. C. Beazley, 'Federal Labor and the American installations: Prelude to government', *Australian Outlook*, vol. 33, no. 2, August 1979, pp. 168–9.
- 17 Rumours of negotiations are noted in K. D. Gott, 'Secret of Frank McManus', *Nation*, 23 April 1960; K. G. Armstrong, 'Political review', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 1961, pp. 109–10; Alan Reid, 'What Kennelly really wants: Not a DLP merger but an ALP purge', *Bulletin*, 27 February 1965, pp. 14–15.
- 18 The (eventually reversed) protest resignation is explained in F. E. 'Joe' Chamberlain, *My Life and Times*, Harold Chamberlain, North Beach, Western Australia, 1998, pp. 166–71. For union pressure on parliamentarians, see Diary entry, 13 April 1959, Gordon Bryant Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 8256, Box 89, Item 3.
- 19 On Caucus discussion of Party reform, see 'Labor MPs to advise on policy methods', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1964, p. 12. The influence of Caucus on the eventual inquiry into Party structure is noted in Editorial, 'Changing the ALP's federal structure', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1964, p. 2. The establishment of the Shadow Ministry is noted in 'Shadow Ministry vote stirs Caucus anger', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1965, p. 4. Caucus factionalism and anger around election to Party policy committees is noted in 'Bitter faction fights in the Labour Caucus', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1964, p. 2. This gave rise to the quest for voting reform within Caucus, an issue which produced further division: 'Federal Labor revolts over party ballots', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1965, p. 4. Predictions of 'internal explosions' include 'Makings of big internal explosion in ALP', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1965, p. 2. The avoidance of this explosion through Caucus 'responsibility' is admitted in 'Calwell almost certain to hold post unchallenged this year', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1965, p. 1.
- 20 The invitation to attend Federal Executive meetings is reported in 'Calwell invited to all sittings of ALP Executive', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1964, p. 1. The Changes to Standing Committees are registered in *ALP, Platform, Constitution and Rules, as approved by the 27th Commonwealth Conference, Adelaide 1967*, C. S. Wyndham, General Secretary ALP, Federal Secretariat, Canberra, August 1967, p. 62. The cause of the changes is explored in Beazley, 'Federal Labor and the American installations',

p. 178. The role of the Standing Committees in expanding the Platform is noted in Clem Lloyd, 'The Federal ALP: Supreme or secondary?', in Andrew Parkin and John Warhurst (eds), *Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party*, George Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1983, pp. 166–7. For the dispute on State Aid, see McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 311–13, and Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1987 (first published, 1977), pp. 31–4.

8 CAUCUS UNDER WHITLAM

- 1 Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1977, p. 86.
- 2 Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur*, p. 88.
- 3 Michelle Grattan, 'The Australian Labor Party', in Henry Mayer and Helen Nelson (eds), *Australian Politics, A Third Reader*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1973.
- 4 *Bulletin*, 9 December 1967.
- 5 A representative from the Northern Territory was also included on these bodies; later a representative from the ACT was included as well.
- 6 Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur*, p. 100.
- 7 The phrase comes from L. F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901–51*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, p. 3.
- 8 Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1985, p. 9.
- 9 *Age*, 26 April 1968.
- 10 Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur*, pp. 132–7.
- 11 Caucus Minutes, 8 April 1970.
- 12 *Age*, 20 April 1972.
- 13 This effected a formal separation between Caucus office holders and the parliamentary leadership and front bench. It meant that, during the period of government, Caucus had an impartial chairman and was not in the procedural control of the executive government.
- 14 Caucus Minutes, 11 October 1972.
- 15 For an historical summary of the role of Caucus committees, see C. J. Lloyd and George S. Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, 1974, pp. 110–11.
- 16 Caucus Minutes, 28 February 1973.
- 17 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, p. 47.
- 18 Caucus Minutes, 16 August 1972; see Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 47–9.
- 19 James Walter, *The Leader*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1980, p. 46.
- 20 *Age*, 1 December 1973.
- 21 Quoted in Walter, *The Leader*, p. 47.
- 22 Paul Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1976, pp. 215–16.
- 23 Caucus Minutes, 2 May 1973.
- 24 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 107–8.
- 25 Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, p. 205; Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government*, p. 692.
- 26 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, p. 154.
- 27 Caucus Minutes, 17 October 1973; see Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 113–14.
- 28 Caucus Minutes, 12, 13, 19, 25 September 1973.
- 29 Caucus Minutes, 5 November 1973.
- 30 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 156–8.
- 31 Caucus Minutes, 12 September, 28 November 1973.
- 32 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 158–9.
- 33 Lloyd and Reid, *Out of the Wilderness*, pp. 161–3; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 15 November 1973, p. 3375.
- 34 Caucus Minutes, 23 July 1974; Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, p. 210–11.
- 35 Caucus Minutes, 24 July 1974.
- 36 Caucus Minutes, 24 July 1974. See Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, p. 209. There was a postscript to this event. Whitlam successfully tempted the Coalition parties into disallowing the pay rise in the cause of wage restraint, a stance that infuriated some Caucus members.
- 37 Caucus Minutes, 31 July 1974.
- 38 Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, pp. 64–74.
- 39 Caucus Minutes, 12 May 1975.
- 40 The loan was reduced to \$2 billion at a meeting of the Executive Council at Government House on 28 February 1975. See Gough Whitlam, *The Truth of the Matter*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic, 1979, p. 55.

- 41 Caucus Minutes, 20 May 1975; Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, pp. 211–13.
- 42 Caucus Minutes, 27 May 1975.
- 43 Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government*, p. 690.
- 44 Caucus Minutes, 14 July 1975; Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough*, pp. 217–28, 233.
- 45 Caucus Minutes, 9 September 1975.

9 THE HAYDEN YEARS

- 1 Although Labor lost 29 seats, three were unsuccessfully defended after their sitting members—Bill Fulton (Qld) and Tony Luchetti and Len Reynolds (NSW)—retired.
- 2 Len Keogh (Qld); Ray Sherry (Tas.); Adrian Bennett and Joe Berinson (WA); Richie Gun (SA); and Bill Morrison (NSW). Len Reynolds (NSW), first elected in 1958, was re-elected in 1969 after his defeat in 1966.
- 3 John Coates (Tas.); Tony Lamb, Max Oldmeadow, David McKenzie and Race Mathews (Vic.); Joe Riordan, John Kerin, Alan Mulder, Bob Whan and Ray Thorburn (NSW).
- 4 Gareth Clayton and Joan Child (Vic.).
- 5 The other five defeated Labor incumbents were Rex Patterson and Manfred Cross (Qld); Ron Davies and Gil Duthie (Tas.); and Fred Collard (WA).
- 6 The author covered the meeting for the *Australian*.
- 7 Bill Hayden, *Hayden: An Autobiography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1996, p. 286.
- 8 Peter Bowers, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1976.
- 9 Apart from Whitlam, Uren and Wriedt, the other five former ministers were Lionel Bowen, John Wheeldon, Paul Keating, Moss Cass and Doug McClelland.
- 10 Laurie Oakes, *Melbourne Sun-Pictorial*, 28 January 1976.
- 11 *Australian*, 18 February 1976.
- 12 ABC Radio, 'AM' program, interview with Hawke, 25 February 1976.
- 13 *Sydney Sun*, 25 February 1976.
- 14 *Sydney Sun*, 25 February 1976.
- 15 *Sydney Sun*, 25 February 1976.
- 16 Warren Beeby, *Australian*, 9 March 1976.
- 17 Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 305.
- 18 John Jost, *Age*, 18 March 1976.
- 19 John Jost, *Age*, 18 March 1976.
- 20 Peter Bowers, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1976.
- 21 Personal conversation.
- 22 Mike Steketee, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1976.
- 23 Paul Kelly, *The Hawke Ascendancy*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1984, p. 352.
- 24 Michelle Grattan, *Age*, 17 August 1976.
- 25 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1976.
- 26 *Adelaide Advertiser*, 12 March 1977.
- 27 Michael Steketee, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1976.
- 28 Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 309.
- 29 Personal conversation.
- 30 *Australian*, 1 June 1977.
- 31 Brian Toohey, *Australian Financial Review*, 23 December 1977.
- 32 Brian Toohey, *Australian Financial Review*, 23 December 1977.
- 33 The author was a member of Hayden's staff.
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INDEX

Page references to photographs and illustrations appear in *italic* type.
Page references to text in the boxed sections appear in **bold** type. For members of the FPLP, the entry includes the name of the electorate represented.

- Aboriginal issues, 32, 234
Aboriginal people
 absence from Caucus, **127**
 apology to, 169
Accord, the, **161**, 247
ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions), 72, 112, **161–2**
adult franchise, 16, 32
Advisory War Council, ix, 74, 76
Affirmative Action policy, 230–1, 234, 248
Albanese, Anthony (Grayndler, NSW), 166, **166–7**, 261
Alexander, J.A., 184–5, 188, 194, 195, 198–9, 201–2
Amour, Stanley (Senator, NSW), 71, 266
Andrews, Tom (Darebin, Vic), 97, 276
ANOP, **132**
Anstey, Frank (Bourke, Vic), 42, 43, 50, 51, 61, 64, 64, 241
arbitration, 32–3
 as Platform plank, 18, 32
 under Bruce–Page Government, ix, 54–5, 57
Archibald, William (Hindmarsh, SA), 42, 43
Armstrong, John (Senator, NSW), 71, 83, 178, **214**, 266
Arthur, Jack (Bendigo, Vic), 41, **41**, 42
Arthur, Thomas (Senator, NSW), 71
Ashley, Bill (Senator, NSW), 71, 77, 83, 178
Aulich, Terry (Senator, Tas), **257**
Australian Airlines, 149
Australian Democrats, 131
Australian Labor Party
 and socialism, 61, 88, 236–7, 241–2
 anti-communist activity in, 91–3, 272–3, 276–7
 as party of initiative, xxiii–xxiv, 39
 commitment to parliamentarism, xviii, xxix, 27, 60–1
 crusading quality, 38–9
 expulsions from, 28–9, 46, 49–51, 273, 278, 280
 formation of Federal Labor Party, xviii, xx, 16, 17
 growth of federal authority in, 72
 historical distinctiveness, xviii, xxi–xxiii

- NSW branch, 55–6, 66, 73, 96, 100, 211, 242, 273
 NSW Federal Labor Party, 68, 73, **210**, 211
 Objective, 236, 241–2
 organisational modernisation, 101–2, **103**, 104, 106–7
 Queensland branch, 216
 role of women in, 223, 230–1
 Victorian branch, 96, 100, 213, 216, 273, 276
See also Caucus; factions; Federal Conference; Federal Executive; Industrial Groups; National Conference; National Executive; Platform; splits
 Australian Labor Party
 (Anti-Communist), 73, 213
 Australian Labour Federation, ix, 11–12
 Australian Socialist League, 237
Australian Worker, 68
 Australian Workers' Union, 48, 61, 63, **161**, 250
- Baker, Francis (Oxley, Qld; Griffith, Qld), xxviii, 70
 Baldwin, Peter (Sydney, NSW), 258
 Bamford, Fred (Herbert, Qld), 19, 21, 28
 bank nationalisation, 85–8
 Barnard, Claude (Bass, Tas), 70, 83, 90, *111*, 178
 Barnard, Lance (Bass, Tas), 105, 109, **109**, 111, *181*, 194–5, *196*, **196–7**, 198
 Barnes, Jack (Senator, Vic), 64, 70, 268
 Barrett, John (Senator, Vic), 14, 19, 21, 24, 28
 Barton Government, 31, 33
 Batchelor, Egerton Lee (Boothby, SA), 12, 19, 24, 27, 33, *34*, 39, *41*, **41**
 Beasley, J.A. 'Stabber Jack' (West Sydney, NSW), 63, **63**, 64, 66, 69, 71, 73, 77, 217, 275, 280
 Beasley group, 66, 265–6, 269, **280–1**
See also Langites
 Beasley Six, 76
 Beazley, Kim Snr (Fremantle, WA), 87, 89, 124, 126, 128, *181*
- Beazley, Kim C. (Swan, WA; Brand, WA), **xxiii**, xxviii, 136, 139
 as Leader, *xvii*, *xxii*, 157, *158*, 159–60, 162–3, **164**, 165, 167–9, 282
 Beilharz, Peter, 248
 Bellamy, Edward, **10**, 27
 Berinson, Joe (Perth, WA), 106, 120, 121
 Bishop, Reg (Senator, SA), 106, 114, *181*
 Bjelke-Petersen, Joh, 278–9
 Black, George, 8–9
 Blackburn, Maurice (Bourke, Vic), 70, 73–4, 80, 273
 Blackburn Declaration, 242
 Blakeley, Arthur (Darling, NSW), 48, 51, 55, 56, *56*, 63, *64*
 Blewett, Neal (Bonython, SA), 131, 136, 145, 146, 253, 255, 262
 Bourke, Bill (Fawkner, Vic), 91, 97, **215**, 276, 277
 Bowen, Lionel (Kingsford-Smith, NSW), 106, 124, *130*, 138, *181*
 Brennan, Frank (Batman, Vic), 46, *64*, 70, 73–4, 88
 Brereton, Laurie (Kingsford-Smith, NSW), 261
 Bretton Woods Agreement, 84–5, 179
 Brisbane Line, ix, 81
 Brisbane Trades and Labour Council, 6
 Bromley, F.H., 6
 Brown, Bill (Senator, Vic), 110, 114
 Brown, Bob (Hunter, NSW), 136, *149*
 Brown, Gordon (Senator, Qld), 70
 Brown, John (Parramatta, NSW), 131, 136, 137
 Brown, Thomas (Canobolas, NSW; Calare, NSW), 19, 21, 24, 29
 Bruce, Stanley Melbourne, 53, 57, **58**
 Bruce-Page Government, 53–9
 Bryant, Gordon (Wills, Vic), *181*, **254**
 Bryson, Bill (Wills, Vic), 97, 276
 Budget leaks, 133
 Burke, Anna (Chisholm, Vic), 232
 Burke, Tom (Perth, WA), 84, 87, 213
 Burns, Tom, 279
 Button, John (Senator, Vic), 124, *130*, 136, 138, 146

- Cabinet
 absence of factionalism in, 260
 Expenditure Review Committee, 117, 146
 inner Cabinet/outer Ministry, 110, 140, 142, 143
See also Caucus–Cabinet relations
 Cairns, James Ford (Yarra, Vic; Lalor, Vic), xxiv, 107, 109, 110, 114, 115, 117, 119–20, 129, 181
 Calwell, Arthur (Melbourne, Vic), **63**, 77, 79, 83, 89, 95, 98, 164
 antagonism towards Curtin, 77, 80–1, 177
 as Leader, 98–102, 101
 Cameron, Angus, 6
 Cameron, Clyde (Hindmarsh, SA), 106, 114, 124, 181
 Cameron, Donald (Senator, Vic), 77, 83, 178
 Cameron, Doug, 162–3
 Cameron, Rod, **132**
 Campbell, George (Senator, NSW), xxiii, 160, 258, 261
 Canberra, 23, 56
 Cant, Harry (Senator, WA), 110
 Carpenter, William, 14
 Carr, Kim (Senator, Vic), **xxiii**, 282
 cartoons and cartoonists, 270–1
 Cass, Moss (Maribyrnong, Vic), 106, 115, 117, 137, 181
 Catholic Church, 212
See also The Movement
 Catholic Social Studies Movement. *See* The Movement
 Catholics, in Caucus, xxviii, 91, 212, 250, 263, 276
 Catley, Bob (Adelaide, SA), **246**, 246, **257**
 Catts, James (Cook, NSW), 48–50, 55, 190
 caucus (as term), 4, **36**, 296n1
 Caucus, x
 as boys' club, **224**, 247
 Chair of, 74, 76, 110, 179, 192, 291
 committee system, 110, 112–13, 143, 145, 179, **180**, 225
 critics, **36**, 236–46
 defections from, 28–9, 46, 66, 176, **206**, **206–7**
 election of Leader and Deputy Leader, xxiv–xxv, 30, 51, **52**, 66, 70, 82, 83, 93, 96, **97**, 105, 109, 113, **116–17**, 120, 124, 130, 136–8, **151–3**, 213, **214–15**, **254–5**, 277–8
 election of Ministry and Shadow Ministry, xxv, 33, 35, 37, 43, 77, 83, 116, 124, 131, 136, 172, 261
 Executive of, 69, 301n23
 Federal Executive's authority over, 84, 211, 277
 impact of NSW branch conflict on, 55–6, 63, 66, 69, 70–1, 73
 in Opposition
 under Beazley, 159, 163, 164, 167–9
 under Calwell, 98–102
 under Curtin, 73–5
 under Evatt, 93–8, 212–13, 227–8
 under Whitlam, 105–7, **108–9**, 109–10, 123–5, 126, 128, 129–30
 in Party decision-making, 102, 104
 Leaders' evaluations of, xvii–xix, **108–9**, **127**, **141**, **154–5**
 missing Minute books, **xxvi–xxvii**
 office holders, 287–91
 on 1975 Remembrance Day, **118–19**
 origins, xviii, xx, 3–16 *passim*, 17, 30, 203–4
 photographs, 38, 70, 186
 powers and roles, xxiv, 60, 79, 205, 208
 press briefings by, 107, 190, 192–3
 press reporting of, **186–7**, 188–95, **196–7**, 198
 Secretary of, 30, 37, 48, 192, 291
 significance, xxv, 159
 size, 17, 47, 61, 69, 74, 90, 156
 solidarity of, 31, 204, 208
 state executives' authority over, 72, 84, 211
 under Watson, 33–5, 37
 women's committee, 225
See also Caucus–Cabinet relations;
 Caucus meetings; Caucus members; pledge; splits
 Caucus–Cabinet relations, 173–83
 Cabinet back-downs and defeats, 65–6, 77, 112, 117, 120, 144–5, 176–7, 182–3

- doctrine of Caucus supremacy, 173, 175, 183
- on Budget matters, 77, 89, 113–15, 144, 148, 153, 155, 177, 181
- procedures for, 110, 111–13, 143–4, 145, 148, 174–5, 181
- reopening Cabinet decisions in
 - Caucus, 114–15, 117, 177, 179, 181, 182
- rule of Cabinet solidarity, **141, 175, 182**
- under Chifley Government, 83–9, 90, 92–3, 177, 179, 276–7
- under Curtin Government, 79–82, 177, 179
- under Fisher Government, 40, 42–3, 174–5
- under Hawke Government, 140–9, **141, 153, 154–5, 182–3, 225**
- under Hughes Government, 43, 45–6, 173–4, 191, 204–8
- under Keating Government, 153, **154–5, 155–6**
- under Scullin Government, 63–6, 68–70, 176–7, **186–7, 208–11, 250, 269**
- under Whitlam Government, 110–15, 117, 119–21, **141, 142, 179, 180, 181**
- See also splits*
- Caucus Crisis* (Denning), 176, **186–7**
- Caucus meetings, xxii–xxiii, **154–5**
 - acrimony in, 46, 64–5, 76, 92–3, 95–7, 205, 210, 213, 250, 277
 - first meeting, xviii, xx, 17, 30
 - morale and attendance, 65, 88, 97, 168
 - photographs of, xxii, 38, 70, 82, 108, 142, 149, 160, 186, 259
 - rules, standing orders and procedures, **xxii–xxiii, 30–1, 69–70, 107, 110**
 - venues, xxii, **xxii–xxiii, 20, 56, 61**
- Caucus members
 - absence of Aborigines, **127**
 - country of birth, 18–19
 - deaths in office, 49
 - family succession, xxviii, 158
 - Federal Executive supervision of, 98
 - in first Parliament, 17–29
 - in Party organisation, 93, 101
 - occupational and social
 - backgrounds, xxvii, 21, 24, 106, **127, 158**
 - personal antagonisms between, 39, 93, 102
 - post-parliamentary careers, xxvii, 28–9
 - previous parliamentary experience, 27
 - religious affiliations, xxviii, 24, 91, 99, 212, 250, 273, 276
 - resources for, xxviii
 - state representation, 18, 47
 - union officials among, 24, 26, 61, 91, 158, **161–2**
 - women, 81, 139, 158, **167, 219–35, 232, 247–8**
- Cavalier, Rodney, 251
- Cavanagh, Jim (Senator, SA), 181
- Centre faction, 263
- Centre Left faction, 146–7, 160, 241, 253, 253, 255, 258, 260–1, **262**
 - in Hawke–Keating battle, **151, 152**
- Centre Unity Group, **134–5**
- Chambers, Cyril (Adelaide, SA), 83, 98, 178
- Charlton, Matthew (Hunter, NSW), 48, 56
 - as Leader, 51, 52, **52, 54, 55**
- Chifley, Ben (Macquarie, NSW), xxi, 56, **62–3, 77, 89, 94, 186, 243**
 - as Leader, 82–5, 88–9, 179, **180, 202**
 - correspondence with Rupert Murdoch, **200–1**
 - ‘light on the hill’ credo, xvii, 87
- Chifley Government, 83–5, 87–9, 179
- Chifley Ministry, **178, 178**
- Child, Joan (Henty, Vic), 122, 221
- Childe, Vere Gordon, 61, 239–41, 241
- Childs, Bruce (Senator, NSW), 143, 254
- Chipp, Don, 131
- Chynoweth, Bob (Flinders, Vic; Dunkley, Vic), 149
- citizen army, 18, 32
- Clarey, Peter James (Bendigo, Vic), 93
- Clark, Joseph (Darling, NSW), 81, 265
- Clothier, Robert Ernest (Senator, WA), 90
- coal strike (1949), 88, 89, 242, 243
- Coates, John (Senator, Tas), 143

- Cockerill, George, 189
 Cohen, Barry (Robertson, NSW), **117**, 131, 137, 258
 Cold War, 87–9, 212
 Cole, George (Senator, Tas), 96, 97, **214**
 Coleman, Percy (Reid, NSW), 51, 54
 Collard, Fred (Kalgoorlie, WA), 114
 Collings, Joseph (Senator, Qld), 70, 71, 77, 79, 90
 Collins, Bob (Senator, NT), **257**
 Collins, Jacinta (Senator, Vic), 229, 232
 Colston, Malcolm (Senator, Qld), 168, 279, 282, 283
 Combe, David, 126, 128
 Commonwealth Bank, 23, 63–4, 65, 149
 Communist Party Dissolution Bill, 92–3, 276–7
 Communist Party of Australia
 ALP's struggle with, 272–3
 attempt to ban, 88, 92–3, 212
 compulsory arbitration. *See* arbitration
 Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, 33
 Conference. *See* Federal Conference; National Conference; State Conferences
 Connor, R.F.X. 'Rex' (Cunningham, NSW), 106, 115, 117, 124, 129, *181*, **254**
 conscription (Vietnam War), 102
 conscription (World War I), **23**, 28, 45–6, 47, 204–7
 conscription (World War II), 73, 79–80, 179, 211–12
 Cook, Joseph, 8
 Cook, Peter (Senator, WA), 147, 159, 165, 255, 259
 Costa, Eric, 94
 Costello, Michael, 159
 Costello, Peter, 155–6
 Country Party, x, 53
 Courtice, Benjamin (Senator, Qld), 83, *178*
 Courtice, Brian (Hinkler, Qld), *246*
 Crawford, Mary (Forde, Qld), 229
 Crean, Frank (Melbourne Ports, Vic), **63**, 114, 115, **119**, 124, 129, *181*
 Crean, Simon (Hotham, Vic), **xxiii**, xxviii, 139, *158*, 159, **162**, 165, *166*
 Cremean, Bert, 276
 Cremean, Jack (Hoddle, Vic), 97, 276
 Crosio, Janice (Prospect, NSW), 228, 232
 Cross, Manfred (Brisbane, Qld), **117**
 Crossin, Trish (Senator, NT), 232, 234
 Crowley, Rosemary (Senator, SA), 225, 228, 232, 234
 Culley, Charles (Denison, Tas), 68
 Curtin, John (Fremantle, WA), xxiv, 56–7, **62–3**, 68, 70, 82, *186*, 280
 as Leader, 70–3, 75, 76–7, 79, 179, 199, 211–12, **281**
 attacks on his leadership, 74–5, 76, 177
 conflict with Calwell, 77, 80–1, 177
 election as Leader, 70, 77
 Curtin Ministry, 77, **178**

 Dale, George, 234
 Daly, Fred (Martin, NSW; Grayndler, NSW), 85, 89, 106, 114, 119, *161*, *180*, **180**, *181*, **215**
 Daly, John (Senator, SA), 64
 Darling, Elaine (Lilley, Qld), *230*
 Dawkins, John (Tangney, WA; Fremantle, WA), 122, 131, 137, 140, 146, **150–1**, **153**, 253
 Dawson, 'Andy' (Senator, Qld), 13, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 33, *34*
 de Largie, Hugh (Senator, WA), 19, 20, 24, 26, 28
 Deakin, Alfred, 25, 33, 35, 37
 Dedman, John (Corio, Vic), **63**, 77, 83, 89, *89*, 90, *178*
 democracy. *See* Labor democracy
 Democratic Labor Party (DLP), x, 97, 100, 213, 278
 Democrats. *See* Australian Democrats
 Denman, Kay (Senator, Tas), 232
 Denning, Warren, 176, **186–7**, 250
 DLP. *See* Democratic Labor Party
 Don, Charles Jardine, 5
 Dooley, John (Senator, NSW), 70
 Drakeford, Arthur (Maribyrnong, Vic), 70, 77, 83, *178*
 Ducker, John, 126
 Duffy, Michael (Holt, Vic), 136, 140, 142
 Duncan, Peter (Makin, SA), **152**
 Dunstan, Don, 246

Dunstan, W.J., 49
 Duthie, Gil (Wilmot, Tas), 84, 89, 89,
180
 Easson, Mary, 227
 East Timor, 129
 Edmonds, Bill (Herbert, Qld), 85, 89,
180, **214**
 Egerton, Jack, 126
 Eldridge, John Chambers (Martin,
 NSW), 64
 elections and election results
 Commonwealth: (1903), 33; (1906),
 35; (1910), 38; (1913), 40;
 (1917), 47; (1925), 53; (1929),
 57, 58, 58–9; (1931), 187,
 210–11; (1934), 211; (1943), 81,
 139; (1946), 83, 139; (1949),
 89; (1951), 273; (1954), 94, 139;
 (1966), 102; (1969) 106; (1972),
 139; (1975), 122; (1977), 131;
 (1980), 136; (1983), 139; (1993),
 153; (1996), 157; (1998), 157
 New South Wales: (1891) 6, **7**, 26;
 (1930) 65
 Ellis, Annette (Canberra, ACT;
 Namadgi, ACT), 232
 EMILY's List, 231
 Enderby, Kep (Australian Capital
 Territory; Canberra, ACT), **118–19**,
 120, 122, *181*
 Evans, Gareth (Senator, Vic; Holt,
 Vic), 137, 143, 181, 256
 Evatt, H.V. 'Doc' (Barton, NSW;
 Hunter, NSW), *xxi*, 74–5, 77, 82,
89, *96*, *178*
 as Leader, 93–8, *95*, 212–13, *214*,
 214–15, 277–8, **281**
 Everingham, Doug (Capricornia, Qld),
 106, 122, 131, 143, *181*
 Expenditure Review Committee, 117,
 146
 factions, 250–64, *251*, *258*
 allocation of perks and jobs by,
 252, 260, 261, 264
 as tool for managing conflict,
 216–17, 251
 Australian Workers' Union as, 61–2
 critics of, 224, 248, 257, 258, 259–60

 during Hawke Government, **141**,
 143, 145–7, 182–3, 258, 260
 formalisation of, **141**, 143, 145–7,
 182, 216–17, **262**
 ideological blurring, 259, 260, 263–4
 in Hawke–Keating contest, **150–3**,
 183, **257**, 260
 in NSW branch (1920s), 55–6, 250
 in 1950s, 250
 in Whitlam years, 251
 incorporation of the Left, 257–8
 Langites, 61, 63
 relative sizes of, 253, 260
 under Beazley, 159, 160, **167**, 261
 under Hawke and Keating, **156**,
 251–3, 255, 257–61, **262–3**
 women and, **224**, 225, 227, *234*
 See also Centre Left; Groupers;
 Independents; Langites; Left
 faction; Right faction
 Fallon, G.C., 70
 Falstein, Max (Watson, NSW), 81, 87,
 90
 Fatin, Wendy (Canning, WA; Brand,
 WA), 223, 228, 234
 Faulkner, John (Senator, NSW), **xxiii**,
 157, **159**, *160*, 282
 Federal Conference, xi
 allows Labor-Protectionist alliance,
 34–5, 37
 as '36 faceless men', xi, 100–1, 215
 endorses Caucus selection of
 ministers, 35, 37
 expulsion of conscriptionists, 46
 FPLP representation on, 106, **108**,
 215
 Leader's use of, 179
 state representation, 32
 urges socialisation, 242
 See also National Conference
 Federal Executive, xi–xii, 66, 68, 72,
 96, 277
 authority over Caucus, 84, 211, 277
 FPLP representation on, 93, 106,
 108, 215
 powers of, 98, 101
 state branch intervention by, 96, 98,
 216, 278
 See also National Executive
 Federal Labor Advisory Committee, 72

- Federal Labor Party, xviii, xx, 16, 17
See also NSW Federal Labor Party
- Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. *See* Caucus
- Fenton, James (Maribyrnong, Vic), 64, 65, 66, 208–9
- Ferguson, Jack, 93, 94
- Ferguson, Martin (Batman, Vic), 160, **162**, 258, 261
- Ferguson, Tony, **132**
- Ferguson, W.J., 4
- Field, Albert, 279
- Findley, Edward (Senator, Vic), 37, 38, 39
- Finlay, Alexander (Senator, SA), 84
- fiscal issue. *See* protection *versus* free trade
- Fisher, Andrew (Wide Bay, Qld), 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 30, 33, 34
 as Leader, 35, 37, 39, 43
- Fisher Government, 37, 39, 174–5
- Fisher Ministry, 37, 39, 40, 42
- Fitzgerald, Joe (Phillip, NSW), 94, 214
- FitzPatrick, John (Darling, NSW), 114
- Forde, Frank (Capricornia, Qld), xxiv, **63**, 64, 70, 70, 77, 79, 82, 82
- Fowler, James Mackinnon (Perth, WA), 18, 19, 28, 190
- franchise, **10**, 16, 32
- Fraser, Allan (Eden-Monaro, NSW), 87, 93, 98
- Fraser, James Mackintosh (Senator, WA), 77, 83
- Fraser, Malcolm, **118–19**
- Fraser Island mining, 115, 117
- Frazer, Charlie (Kalgoorlie, WA), 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, **41**
- Free, Ross (Macquarie, NSW; Lindsay, NSW), 136, 149, 168
- Free Traders, x
- Frost, Charlie (Franklin, Tas), 70, 77
- Fry, Ken (Fraser, ACT), 143
- Fuller, Arthur (Hume, NSW), 85, 89, 180
- Fusion (of Protectionists and Free Traders), x, 37
- Gabb, Joel Moses (Angas, SA), 66, 210
- Gaha, John Francis (Denison, Tas), 84
- Galvin, Pat (Kingston, SA), 93
- Garden, Jock, xiii, 56
- Gardiner, Albert ‘Jupp’ (Senator, NSW), 42, 43, 47
- Gayler, John (Leichhardt, Qld), 261
- George, Jennie, 247
- Georges, George (Senator, Qld), 114
- Gerick, Jane (Canning, WA), 232
- Gibbons, George (Calare, NSW), 65
- Gibbs, Brenda (Senator, Qld), 232
- Gibson, Sir Robert, 64–5
- Gietzelt, Arthur (Senator, NSW), 115, 129, 131, 254, 258
- Giles, Pat (Senator, WA), 225, 234
- Gillard, Julia (Lalor, Vic), 232, **232**
- Gilmore, Mary, 29
- Givens, Thomas (Senator, Qld), 207
- Glasse, Thomas, 6, 13
- Gorman, Russ (Chifley, NSW; Greenway, NSW), 246
- Governor-General
 double dissolution powers, 40
- Grassby, Al (Riverina, NSW), 113
- Green, Albert (Kalgoorlie, WA), 64, 70
- Griffith, Samuel, 25
- Griffiths, Alan (Maribyrnong, Vic), 259
- Grimes, Don (Senator, Tas), 124, 131, 137
- Groupers, x, 212–13, **281**
- Gun, Richie (Kingston, SA), 106
- Guy, J.A. (Bass, Tas), 66
- Hadley, Jim (Lilley, Qld), 85
- Hall, Jill (Shortland, NSW), 232
- Hand, Gerry (Melbourne, Vic), 147, 252, 258, 259
- Hanson, Pauline, **164**, 165
- Hardy, Frank, 93, 244
- Harradine, Brian, 279
- Hartley, Bill, 128, 145–6
- Hawke, Bob (Wills, Vic), xxv, xxx, 126, 133, 136, 137, 140, 141, 150
 as Leader, 139–53, **141**, **150**, **161**, 246
 challenges Hayden’s leadership, xxv, 126, 131, 133, **134–5**, 136, 137–8
 defeated by Keating, **150–3**
 factional backing, 145, 146
- Hawke Government, 139–53
 and traditional Labor values, 140, 149, 153
 factional conflicts under, 143
 factional consultation under, **141**

- formalisation of factions, **141**, 143, 145–7, 182, 216–17
- incorporation of the Left, 257–8
- relations with Caucus, 140–9, **141**, 153, 182, 225
- rule of Cabinet solidarity, **141**, 142
- Hawke–Keating contest, **150–3**, 183, **257**, 260
- Hayden, Bill (Oxley, Qld), **63**, 112–13, 114, 117, 123, *127*, 128–9, *131*, 143, *181*, 253, *253*, *262*
- as Leader, 125–6, *130*, 131, 133–8, 216
- on Caucus transformation, **128**
- See also* Centre Left faction
- Haylen, Leslie (Parkes, NSW), 81, 83
- Hearn, Jean (Senator, Tas), 234
- Hepher, John, *14*
- Higgins, Henry Bournes, 33, *34*, 174
- Higgs, William Guy (Capricornia, Qld), *14*, *19*, 21, 24, 28–9, 43, 49
- High Court, 87, 88
- Hinchcliffe, Albert, *14*, 29
- Hoare, Kelly (Charlton, NSW), 232
- Holding, Clyde (Melbourne Ports, Vic), 131
- Holloway, E.J. ‘Ted’ (Flinders Vic; Melbourne Ports, Vic), 57, **58–9**, 68, 70, 77, 83, *178*
- Holman, William Arthur, 29, 268
- Hotel Kurrajong, 57, *62*, **62–3**
- Howard, John, 133, **164**
- Howard Government, 168–9
 - probity of ministers, 159–60, 165, 169
- Howe, Brian (Batman, Vic), 131, 146, **151**, 252, 257–8
- Hughes, William Morris (West Sydney, NSW), *14*, 19, *19*, 23, 26–7, 31, 33, *34*, 38, 40, 57, **161**, 267, 270, *271*
- as Leader, 43, 204–7
- as Nationalist Prime Minister, **50**, 53
- defection by, xxv, *45*, 191, 205–8, **206**, 267–8, *270*
- Hughes Government, 43, 45–6, 173–4, 191, 204–8
- Hughes Ministry, 43
- Hulls, Rob (Kennedy, Qld), 261
- Humphreys, Ben (Griffith, Qld), 131
- Hurford, Chris (Adelaide, SA), 106, **116–17**, 124, 131
- Hutchison, James (Hindmarsh, SA), 37, *41*, **41**
- Hyman, J., *14*
- Independents, 160
- Industrial Groups, xi, 91, 96, 212–13, 273
 - See also* Groupers
- Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), 238–9, **240**
- initiative and referendum, 16
- Innes, U.E. ‘Ted’ (Melbourne, Vic), 113, 131, 137
- intercolonial conference of labor parties, 14, 15, 17
- Irish Nationalist Party, 9
- Jacomb, C.E., 36
- Jakobsen, Carolyn (Cowan, WA), 230, 234
- James, Rowley (Hunter, NSW), xxviii, 57, 63, 76, 85, 86, **86**, 265
- Jenkins, Harry (Scullin, Vic), 143
- Jensen, Jens (Bass, Tas), 42
- Johnson, Bill (Robertson, NSW), 45
- Johnson, Les (Hughes, NSW), *181*, **254**
- Johnson, Vic (Kalgoorlie, WA), 83, 98, *178*
- Jones, Barry (Lalor, Vic), 131, 137, 140, **262**
- Jones, Charlie (Newcastle, NSW), 106, *181*
- Joshua, Robert (Ballaarat, Vic), 97, 276
- Katz, Frederick (Senator, Vic), 88
- Keane, Richard (Bendigo, Vic; Senator Vic), 66, 68, 77
- Keating, Paul John (Blaxland, NSW), xxv, xxx, **63**, **116–17**, 121, 124, *124*, 129, 130, 131, **134**, 140, *150*, **254–5**
- as Leader, 147, 153, *154*, 155–6, 183, 261
- challenges to Hawke’s leadership, **150–3**
- factional support for, **151–3**
- See also* Hawke–Keating contest
- Keating Government, 155–6
- Keeffe, Jim (Senator, Qld), 124, 131
- Kelly, Ros (Canberra, ACT), 136, 143, 226, 228
- Kenneally, J.J., 211

- Kennelly, Patrick J. (Senator, Vic), 84, 103, **103**
- Keogh, Len (Bowman, Qld), 114
- Keon, Standish (Yarra, Vic), 91, 97, **215**, 276
- Kerin, John (Macarthur, NSW; Werriwa, NSW), 117, 133, 137, **152**
- Kernot, Cheryl (Dickson, Qld), 167–8, 229, 230, 232, **232–3**
- Kerr, Duncan (Denison, Tas), 246
- Kerr, Sir John, **118–19**, 125–6
- Kingston, C.C., 33
- Kirner, Joan, 225, 234
- Kirribilli agreement, **151**
- Kirribilli Committee, 145, 147
- Klugman, Dick (Prospect, NSW), 106, 131, 136, 137
- Labor democracy, 60–1, 91–2, 107, 204, 236
- Labor Electoral League, ix, xi, 26
- Labor Parties (pre-Federation)
election of leader, 13
evolution of a solidarity pledge, 6, 8–9, 11–12
intercolonial conference of, 14, 15
New South Wales, 6, 8–9, 13, 26, 203–4
platforms, 26
Queensland, 11–12, 16, 26
South Australia, 12, 26
Victoria, 9, 11, 12–13, 26
- Labor-Protectionist alliance, 33–5, 37
- Labor tradition
versus economic reform, 140, 149, 153, 162–3
- labour movement
commitment to parliamentary action, xxix, 27
criticism of Labor politicians, 237–45
support of White Australia policy, 32
theory of democracy, 3–4
- Lambert, William Henry (West Sydney, NSW), 51, 55–6
- Lamp, Charles Adcock (Senator, Tas), 81, 84, 90
- Lane, William, **10–11**, 11, 27, 29
- Lang, J.T., xiii, 55–6, 63, 84–5, 208–9, 262–3, 270–1, 271, 280
- Lang Labor. *See* Langites
- Lang Plan, 66, 176, 209, 269
- Langites, 61, 63, 64, 66, 68, 71, 73, 76, 209–10, 217, 269, 274, **280–1**
- Langtry, Joseph (Riverina, NSW), 85, 90
- Latham, John, 53, 269
- Latham, Mark (Werriwa, NSW), 167, 247
- Lavelle, Thomas (Calare, NSW), 49
- Lawrence, Carmen (Fremantle, WA), 167, 225, 228, 230, 232, 233
- Lawson, George (Brisbane, Qld), 70, 77, 87
- Lazzarini, Bert (Werriwa, NSW), 63, 64, 71, 76, 77, 83, 85, 217, 266
- Leader(s)
allocation of portfolios by, 107, 110
Caucus election of. *See* Caucus,
election of Leader and Deputy
Leader
dismissal of ministers by, 129
list of, 282
relations with the press, 107, 189–90, 193–4, 199, 202
selection of ministers by, 25, 33, 261
their evaluations of Caucus, xvii–xix, **108–9**, **127**, **141**, **154–5**
See also individual Leaders
- Lee, Michael (Dobell, NSW), 159, 261
- Left faction, 160, **254**
and Hawke–Hayden contest, **134–5**
and Hawke–Keating battle, **151**, **152**
divisions in, 258, 261
during World War II, 73–4
in Whitlam years, 251
incorporation and influence of, 257–8
under Hawke, 145–6, 148
- Lemmon, Nelson (Forrest, WA), 83, 87, 90, 178
- Lenin, V.I., xviii
- Lesina, Joseph, 14
- Liberal Party, xi
- ‘light on the hill’, xvii, 87, **127**
- Lindrum, Walter, 180
- Livermore, Kirsten (Capricornia, Qld), 232
- Luchetti, Tony (Macquarie, NSW), 114, **215**
- Lundy, Kate (Senator, ACT), 229, 232
- Lyons, Enid, 219

- Lyons, Joseph (Wilmot, Tas), xiii, 64, 65–6, 184–5, 186, **187**, 208–10, 268–9
- MacArthur, General Douglas, 80, **86**
- Mackay, Sue (Senator, Tas), 229, 234
- Macklin, Jenny (Jagajaga, Vic), 159, 165, 229, 232, 233, 261
- Maher, Michael (Lowe, NSW), 137
- Mahon, Hugh (Coolgardie, WA; Kalgoorlie, WA), 19, 21, 32, 33, 34, 39, 49, 50, **50**, 207
- Mahoney, Gerald William (Denison, Tas), 70
- Mahony, William George (Dalley, NSW), 51, 55
- Makin, Norman (Hindmarsh, SA), 49, 54, 68, 70, 77, 82
- Maloney, Dr William Robert Nuttall (Melbourne, Vic), 10, 67, **67**, 69, 70, 73
- Mann, Tom, 237–8
- marginal seat strategy, **132**
- Maritime Strike (1890), 25–6
- Maritime Strike (1925), 54
- Martens, George (Herbert, Qld), 70, 74, 82
- Mathews, James (Melbourne Ports, Vic), 51
- Mathews, Race (Casey, Vic), 112
- Mayer, Helen (Chisholm, Vic), 223, 225, 234
- Mayer, Henry, xxiii, 244
- McClelland, Doug (Senator, NSW), 126, 130–1, 136, 137, 181
- McClelland, Jim (Senator, NSW), 110, 120, 121, 124, 129
- McDonald, Charles (Kennedy, Qld), 14, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 30
- McDonald, John (Senator, Qld), 70
- McDougall, J.K. (Wannon, Vic), 44, **44**
- McFarlane, Bruce, 246
- McFarlane, Jann (Stirling, WA), 232
- McGowen, J.S.T., 8, 13, 14, 29
- McGrath, Charlie (Ballarat, Vic), 51, 54
- McGregor, Gregor (Senator, SA), 19, 20, 28, **28**, 30, 33, 34, 39
- McHugh, Jeannette (Phillip, NSW), 223, 228
- McKenna, Nick (Senator, Tas), 83, 87, 88, 99, **99**, 178
- McKissock, Andy (Senator, Vic), 268
- McLeay, Leo (Grayndler, NSW; Watson, NSW), **xxiii**, 133, 246, 261, 263
- McLucas, Jan (Senator, Qld), 234
- McMullan, Bob (Senator ACT; Canberra, ACT), 261
- McNeill, John (Wannon, Vic), 268
- McQueen, Humphrey, 245
- Medibank, 112–13
- Melbourne Agreement, 64–5, 208
- Melbourne Trades Hall Council, 6
- Melzer, Jean (Senator, Vic), 221
- Menzies, Robert Gordon
exploits communist issue, 87–8, 212–13, 273
seeks all-party national government, 76–7
- Metal Workers Union, 258
- Mildren, John (Ballarat, Vic), 144
- Milliner, Bert (Senator, Qld), 278
- Ministers
Leader's freedom to select, 33, 35, 261
See also Caucus, election of Ministry and Shadow Ministry
- Moloney, Parker (Indi, Vic; Hume, NSW), 64
- Morgan, Charlie (Reid, NSW), 80, 81–2, 84
- Morris, Peter (Shortland, NSW), 124, 131
- Morrison, Bill (St George, NSW), 106, 181, 252
- Morrow, William (Senator, Tas), 88
- Movement, The, xi, 91, 93, 94, 96, 97, 276
- Mulcahy, Dan (Lang, NSW), 85, 265
- Mullens, Jack (Gellibrand, Vic), 91, 93, 97, **214–15**, 276, 277
- Mundey, Jack, 245
- Murdoch, Keith, 184–5, 189, 199, **200**, 201–2
- Murdoch, Rupert, 126
as 'zealous Laborite', **200–1**
- Murdoch press, 128, 199
- Murphy, John (Lowe, NSW), **xxiii**
- Murphy, Lionel (Senator, NSW), 107, 110, 111, 181

- Murphy, Shayne (Senator, Tas), 158
 Murphy, W.E., 6
 MX missile test plan, 144–5, 180,
 182–3, 255
- National Conference, xi
 affirmative action decision, 230–1
 See also Federal Conference
- National Executive, xi–xii, 216
 state branch intervention by, 216
 See also Federal Executive
- nationalisation of monopolies, 32
- Nationalist Party, xii, xiii
- Neal, Belinda (Senator, NSW), 229
- Needham, Edward (Senator, WA), 53
- Nelson, J.N. ‘Jock’ (Northern
 Territory), 180
- New Australia, 11
- New Left, xii, 245–7
- New Protection, xii
- Niemeyer, Sir Otto, 64, 208
- NSW branch, 55–6, 66, 73, 96, 100,
 211, 242, 273
- NSW Federal Labor Party, 68, 73, **210**,
 211
- O’Brien, Kerry (Senator, Tas), **xxiii**
- O’Byrne, Justin (Senator, Tas), 89
- O’Byrne, Michelle (Bass, Tas), 232
- O’Connor, Bill (West Sydney, NSW), 85
- O’Flaherty, Sidney (Senator, SA), 88
- Ogden, James (Senator, Tas), 50
- O’Keefe, David (Senator, Tas), 19, 21
- O’Keefe, Neil (Burke, Vic), 261
- old age pensions, 16, 32
- O’Malley, King (MHR, Tas; Darwin,
 Tas), 19, 21, 22, **22–3**, 30, 31, 37,
 39, 43, 207
- One Nation Party, **164**, 165
- Page, James (Maranoa, Qld), 19, **20**,
 30, 49
- Parliament, 48
 as ‘house of dead hopes’, xxix
 exclusion of press from, 190
 expulsion from, 50
 first (‘maiden’) speeches, 231, 233–4
 isolation of members, xxix, 56
 positions held by FPLP members,
 292–4
- parliamentarism, xviii, xxix, 27, 60–1
- Parnell, Charles, 9
- Patterson, Rex Alan (Dawson, Qld),
 106, 114, 123, 181
- Pearce, George (Senator, WA), 19, 21,
 24, 26, 27, 28, 39, 53, 206, 207, 268
- Peters, E.W. (Burke, Vic), 91
- Petrov Royal Commission, 95, 98, 213,
 214, 277–8
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Bill, 88
- Platform, xii, **15**, 16, 18, 21
- pledge, xii, 16, 32, 203–4, 208, 266–7
 colonial antecedents, 6, 8–9, 11–12
 opponents of, 8–9
- Plibersek, Tanya (Sydney, NSW), 232,
 234
- Political Labour League, ix, 5
- Pollard, Reginald Thomas (Ballaarat,
 Vic; Lalor, Vic), 83, 93, **97**, 98, 178,
 277
- Poyser, George (Senator, Vic), 114
- Premiers’ Plan, 68, 176
- preselection, xxviii, 223, 227, 247–8
- Press Gallery, 189, 193 **187**, 195
 Leaders’ relations with, 107,
 189–90, 193–4, 199, 202
- press secretaries, 193–4
- Price, Jack (Boothby, SA), 66
- Price, Tom, 14
- privatisation, 149, 162
- protection *versus* free trade, 6, 8, 16,
 31
- Protectionist Party, xii
 coalition between Labor and, 33–5,
 37
- Qantas, 149
- Quick, Harry (Franklin, Tas), **xxiii**
- Rae, Arthur (Senator, NSW), 40
- racism, 21, **164**
 See also White Australia policy
- ‘rats’, 28–9, 168, 262–83 *passim*
 bitterness towards, 168, 268, 269,
 272
 cartoon depictions, 206, 270, 274,
 283
 readmission into Party, 269, **281**
 See also splits
- Ray, Robert (Senator, Vic), 147, 167,
 252, 256, 257, 258, 259, 282
- reconciliation, 169

- ‘Red Rules’, 56
 referendum(s)
 as plank in Platform, 16, 18
 on Communist Party dissolution, 92–3, 212
 on ‘essential services’, 54–5
 on incomes and prices, 112
 on military conscription, 46, 47–8, 204–5, 206
 to enlarge powers of
 Commonwealth, 39, 40, 54–5, 83–4
 Reid, Alan, 194–5, 196, **196–7**, 198
 Reid, George, x
 Remembrance Day 1975, **118–19**
 Reynolds, Margaret (Senator, Qld), 225, 228, 232, 234
 Richardson, Graham (Senator, NSW), 144, 147, **151**, 160, 252, 256, 258, 261
 Right faction, 160, **256–7**, **134–5**
 in Hawke–Keating contest, **151–3**, **257**
 in Whitlam years, 251
 leadership, 261
 Riley, Edward (South Sydney, NSW), 54
 Riordan, Bill (Kennedy, Qld), 83, 178
 Riordan, David ‘Darby’ (Kennedy, Qld), 70, 70
 Riordan, Joe (Phillip, NSW), 121
 Roberts, Ernest Alfred (Adelaide, SA), 41, **41**
 Rodgers, Don, 81, 85, 193, 193, 195
 Ronald, James (Southern Melbourne, Vic), 19, 21, 24, 28, 30, 32
 Rosa, S.A., **10**
 Rosevear, Sol (Dalley, NSW), 71, 77, 81, 83, 88, 266
 Roxon, Nicola (Gellibrand, Vic), 232, 233, 234
 Rudd, Kevin (Griffith, Qld), 166, **166–7**
 Russell, Ted (Senator, Vic), 42, 46
 Ryan, Susan (Senator, ACT), 131, 221, 223, **224**, 224, 225, 228, 234, 262
 Ryan, T.J. (West Sydney, NSW), 48–9, 49
 Santamaria, B.A., 94, 273, 276
 Sawford, Rod (Port Adelaide, SA), 261
 Schacht, Chris (Senator, SA), 146
 Schey, W.F., 8
 Scholes, Gordon (Corio, Vic), 124, 131
 Scott, Andrew, 162–3, 247
 Scullin, James (Corangamite, Vic; Yarra, Vic), 35, 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 64, 70, 76, 186, 209, 241
 as Leader, 64–5, 66, 69–70
 Scullin Caucus, 186
 Scullin Government, 63–6, 68–70, 176–7, **186–7**, 208–11, 250, 269
 Scullin Ministry, 64
 Scully, Bill (Gwydir, NSW), 77, 83, 90, 178
 sectarianism, xxviii, 93, **127**
 Shadow Ministry, 102, 107, 124
 Sheehan, Tom (Cook, NSW), 85, 89, 265
 Sherry, Nick (Senator, Tas), 167
 Snow, Jim (Eden-Monaro, NSW), 246
 Social Democratic Federation of Western Australia, 237
 social justice, 263
 socialisation units, 242
 socialism, **10**, 27
 Socialist Labor Party, 237
 socialist objective, 61, 88, 241–2
 Somerville, William, 25
 Southwell, Belle, **62–3**
 Spence, William Guthrie (Darling, NSW), 8–9, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 37, 42, 43, 268
 splits
 consequences and lessons, 208, 211, 213, 215–18, 282
 during Depression, 66, 208–11, 269
 over anti-communism, 96–7, 212–15, 276–8
 over military conscription, 46, 191, 204–8, 267–8
 See also Langites; ‘rats’
 State Aid, 100, 101, 104
 State Conferences, xii, 45
 State Executives (Administrative Committees), xiii
 authority over Caucus, 72, 84, 211
 Stewart, Frank (Lang, NSW; Grayndler, NSW), 133, 180, 181, **215**, **255**
 Stewart, James (Senator, Qld), 14, 19, **20**, 23, 30, 37
 Street, Jessie, 219–20

- ‘support in return for concessions’
strategy, 9, 31
- Sydney Trades and Labour Council, 6, 26
- Tangney, Dorothy (Senator, WA), 81, 219–21, 220
- Tanner, Lindsay (Melbourne, Vic), 261
- tariffs, 31, 113
- television interviews, **132–3**
- Telstra sale, 163
- Theodore, E.G. ‘Red Ted’ (Dalley, NSW), xxvii, 51, **52**, 52, 56, 63, 64, 64–6, 68, 69, **186**, 208–10, 209, 274, 274–5
- ‘36 faceless men’ jibe, xi, 100–1, 106, **108**
- Thomas, Josiah (Barrier, NSW), 14, 19, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30, 39
- Thompson, Michael, 248
- Thorburn, Ray (Cook, NSW), 116
- Tocsin*, 11
- trade unions
and ALP, **161–2**
commitment to parliamentary
action, xxix
growth of, 24
nineteenth century political action,
5–6, 26
unity tickets in, 100
- Trades and Labour Council (Sydney), 6, 26
- Trades Hall Reds, xiii, 56
- Trenwith, W.A., 6, 11, 13, 29
- Tudor, Frank (Yarra, Vic), 19, 21, 23, 37, 39, 46, 49
as Leader, 47–8, 49, 191
- Tuesday Club, **254**
- unions. *See* trade unions
- United Australia Party, xiii
- Uren, Tom (Reid, NSW), 106, 124, 130, 131, 137–8, 181, 254, **254–5**, 258
- utopianism, **10–11**
- Victorian branch, 96, 100, 213, 216, 273, 276
- Walker, Frank (Robertson, NSW), **151–2**, 261
- Walsh, Geoff, 159
- Walsh, Peter (Senator, WA), 140, 146, 253
- Ward, Eddie (East Sydney, NSW), ix, 71, 74, 76, 77, 78, **78–9**, 79, 81, 93, 178, 244
as contender for leadership, 83, 95, **97**, 98, **99**
as critic of Groupers, 213, **215**
as Langite, 176, 209, 217, 265
- Waters, Frank, 101
- Watkins, David, (Newcastle, NSW), xxviii, 19, 21, 24, 37, 54, 63
- Watson, J.C. ‘Chris’ (Bland, NSW; South Sydney, NSW), xxvii, 14, 19, 20, **20**, 20–1, 23, 28, 30, 32, 35, 39, 172, 174
- Watson Government, 33, **34**
- Watson Ministry, 33, **34**, 34, 174
- wealth taxation, 148
- Webster, William (Gwydir, NSW), 43
- West, Stewart (Cunningham, NSW), 136, 145, **152**, 258
- West, Sue (Senator, NSW), **xxiii**, 232
- Whan, Bob (Eden-Monaro, NSW), 117
- Wheeldon, John (Senator, WA), 120, 129, 181
- White Australia policy, **15**, 16, 32, **164**
- Whitlam, Edward Gough (Werriwa, NSW), xxiv, 98, 101, 118, 133, 181
as Leader, 105–7, **108–9**, 109–11, 111, 123–5, 130, 131
as Party moderniser, 102, 105–7, **108–9**, 109, 125, **127**, 215–16
diminished standing with Caucus, 123–4, 125, 126, 128, 129–30
sacking of Cairns, 117, 119–20
- Whitlam–Barnard Ministry, 111
- Whitlam Government
Caucus–Cabinet relations, 110–15, 117, 119–21, **141**, 142, 179, **180**, 181
dismissal, **118–19**, 125–6
social progressivism of, 245–7
- Whitlam Ministry, 181
- Willesee, Don (Senator, WA), 111, 181
- Williams, Thomas Francis (Robertson, NSW), 90
- Willis, Ralph (Gellibrand, Vic), 124, 131, 136, 137
- ‘Wobblies’, 238–9, **240**

- women
 - in Caucus, 219–35
 - on Caucus frontbench, 228–9
 - policies for, 225–6
 - preselection of, 223, 227, 247–8
- Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL), 221, **222**, 245
- women’s issues, 225, 231, 232–3
- women’s movement, **10**
- women’s suffrage, **10**, 32
- wool reserve price, 117
- World War I, 42–3, 45–6, 204–7
- World War II
 - conscription, 79–80, 211–12
 - proposed national government, 74, 76–7
- Wran, Neville, 131
- Wriedt, Ken (Senator, Tas), 117, **119**, 124, 128, *130*, 137, *181*
- Wyndham, Cyril, 102, 104
- Yates, George (Adelaide, SA), 63, 64, 68
- Young, Mick (Port Adelaide, SA), **116–17**, 117, *124*, 131, 133, 136, 137, 146, *161*, **162**, *253*
- Zakharov, Olive (Senator, Vic), 225