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Editorial

Howard Guille

A nation building election – but the wrong nation?

All elections are, in their own way, historic; if only for the ‘what ifs’. Perhaps the most substantial feature of the 2016 Federal Election is that the ALP did relatively poorly in Queensland. The state-wide swing to the ALP in Queensland was 1.1 per cent compared with 2.4 in New South Wales, 3.1 in Tasmania and 3.7 in Western Australia. Only Victoria (0.8 per cent) was lower than Queensland. If this was the most substantial feature, the most remarked is the election of two Senators from Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party (ONP). They are two of four senators elected for the party across Australia giving it a strong position in the balance of parliamentary power.

The ALP gained two seats in the House of Representatives - Longman with a swing of 7.71 per cent and Herbert with a swing of 6.19 per cent (but a majority of 37). The LNP retained Capricornia, its most marginal seat in Queensland where the swing to the ALP was a miniscule 0.14 per cent. ‘If only’, the ALP had won, the Coalition Government would not have had a

majority in the House; perhaps also, Malcolm Turnbull would not have been Liberal leader and Prime Minister.

There is an echo of 1961, when Jim Killen won Moreton for the Liberals by 130 votes after the distribution of preferences. If one ‘counts’ Morton as the last seat, it gave the Coalition 62 seats in the House to 60 for the ALP and kept Menzies in government. The folk-story is that Killen won on Communist Party voter preferences. 93 second preferences did go from Max Julius¹, the Communist Party candidate to Jim Killen. If these had gone to the ALP, and there had been no other changes, the net change of 186 would have won the seat for the ALP candidate, John Edward O’Donnell. But, this is not the full story since 193 second preferences from Communist Party voters went to the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Killen won on DLP preferences and at least some of the Communist second preferences going to the DLP would have put Liberals third and Labor fourth. As Andrew Bartlett states *‘the very large percentage of Communist Party preferences which went to the DLP’* is *‘the more remarkable’*.

Menzies may have campaigned against the communists for a

long-time (he did try to make the whole party illegal after all), but being anti-communist was one of the central tenets of the DLP's whole existence.²

Labor's failure to win Capricornia in 2016 also depended on the distribution of preferences. The LNP got 40.1 per cent of first preferences and the ALP 38.1. Both of these were relatively high - for example in Herbert, Labor's first preference vote was 30.5 per cent and the LNP 35.5. The main difference was that the One Nation candidate got 13.5% of first preferences in Herbert but there was no ONP candidate in Capricornia. The ALP received a 1.1 per cent swing on first preferences in both Capricornia and Herbert. However, the LNP had a 7.8 per cent swing against it in Herbert but a small positive swing of 0.5 per cent in Capricornia. With six candidates in each electorate and preferences seemingly scattering every which way, there is a distinctive sense that Labour (just) won Herbert because of the presence of One Nation and, perhaps, did not win Capricornia because of their absence.

A disturbing outcome of the Senate election in Queensland is that the gender balance went backwards from four of twelve to three of twelve. It is not a great outcome.. Queensland elected five LNP Senators (all men), four ALP (one woman, three men), two ONP (one woman, one man) and one Green (a woman). The LNP had

one woman senate candidate (sitting Senator Joanne Lindgren) who was sixth of eight on their ticker. The ALP had three women out of six candidates with Senator Claire Moore in an electable position at third on the ticket. Jane Casey and Cheryl Thompson were fifth and sixth respectively.

The LNP professes to pre-select its candidates on merit and eschews gender quotas. The seven men on their ticket must have superlative talents if they are all better than all but one of the possible women candidates. The 2015 ALP State Conference passed a resolution to have at least 50 per cent women in winnable seats. However, this year's Senate ticket is not affected since the rule cuts in in 2025, Senator Jan McLucas could be replaced by a man and the order of the ticket could put two men first and two women last.

Yet the big news is that Pauline Hanson and Malcolm Roberts have been elected as Senators for Queensland. Some of their views are infamous; Pauline has been professing strong views about Muslims and Malcolm says climate change is a United Nations conspiracy. One Nation received 9.2 per cent of the first preference Senate vote across Queensland as a whole. But it was very much a vote from outside the South East. In the Brisbane electorate, the ONP Senate vote was 1.8 per cent; 2.9 per cent in Moreton; 6.1 per cent in Oxley and 6.3 per cent in Moncrieff (Gold Coast). However the ONP vote

was 13.3 per cent in Herbert, 12.3 per cent in Groom, 15.6 per cent in Capricornia and 17.1 per cent in Hinkler. In all of these electorates, the Green vote in the Senate was around four to five per cent.

History is probably better at understanding economic and structural changes than short-run shifts in voting. Though it is pleasing that the polling booth in Barcardine showed a 10.7 per cent swing to the ALP even though the final count in Maranoa was between the LNP and ONP with the ALP eliminated.³

At the beginning of Federation, the ALP and the Deakinite Liberals shared the objectives of arbitration based on unions, industrial protection and white Australia. Now there are some curious couplings. The LNP are for market deregulation, free trade, against refugees who come on boats but for short-term visas for overseas workers and for population growth. They are also anti-union. The ALP are for free trade and quite a lot of market; they are against refugees who come on boats and are alright about overseas workers so long as they get award wages. They are for population growth and for unions. One Nation is against free trade and too much market, against refugees and Muslim immigrants; they support unions to ‘*protect them (workers) from unscrupulous employers*’.⁴ The Greens are against free trade and market globalisation, for refugees but against

population growth. They support unions and industry regulation.

It is a curious mix – for example which party (and which part of a party) is heir to which part of the Federation legacy. Furthermore, there are likely to be some odd and intriguing alliances on particular matters. It will not be easy for the ALP or the Greens to evading voting with One Nation on some matters. The Beattie gambit of the 1990’s is not available. Moreover, the ALP (and perhaps unions as well) need to work out what to do in the regional and coastal areas of Queensland where the collapse of the mining and commodity economy is visiting high levels of underemployment on workers and their communities. The Federation trio of arbitration, protection and white were a response to not dissimilar economic conditions.

Themes of nation and divisions occur in some of the articles in this issue. Raymond Evans argues that ‘*There never was a greater tragedy than World War One*’. In a magisterial article (in the best possible sense) he exposes the triteness of the legend of the creation of a nation. Thus, ‘*Instead of a dominant narrative of national unity, a story of incessant struggle, conflict and division continued to grow*’. Jeff Rickertt also writes about the first world war and how the 1917 anti-conscription campaign in Queensland movement ‘*split into a Laborist majority and a revolutionary minority*’. The article is a spin-off from

his superb biography of Ernie Lane, *'The Conscientious Communist'*. This will be reviewed in the next issue of QJLH; however our advice is get it and read it now.

Bob Carnegie, the Queensland Secretary of the MUA gave the 2016 Alex Macdonald lecture and a transcript is published in this issue. Bob challenges the business union model - very graphically in describing how hard it can be even to get into the offices of some unions. He challenges all of us to think about genuinely opening up unions to, of all things, their members.

John McCollow provides a learned and sympathetic reading of Errol O'Neill's plays in the first of two investigations of his work – the second part to be published in March 2017. These plays were also about divisions. As well as particular conflicts between capital and labour, *'they explore conflicts within the labour movement at greater length and in greater depth'*. The plays are about ideas; especially important for *'the labour movement which is the clearing house for far-reaching socially progressive initiatives'*. Bob Carnegie would agree.

Rob Whyte remembers Errol O'Neill. And with Errol's words

You realise you owe a great debt to the legions of real people you have known and dealt with over a lifetime and from whom you

have taken lessons in the simple and honest art of being human.

John McCollow also notes that Errol tried to 'write women back into the history of the labour movement'. This is very germane to the article by Jan Ryall about her mother Norma Nord. This is an important article - part of what Jan and Jocelynne Scutt see as the need to *'recapture the lives of women, lives which have been written out of official history or simply ignored by the pundits'*.

Notes

- 1 Max Julius is also renowned as one of the three people, with Mick Healy and E.C. E. C. Englart to be imprisoned for non-payment of fines during the 1948 Rail Strike. See, among other sources John McGuire, 'Julius, Max Nordau (1916–1963)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/julius-max-nordau-10652/text18929>
- 2 Andrew Bartlett, Sir James Killen: Moreton, Menzies and Mythology, 17 January, 2007 <http://andrewbartlett.com/sir-james-killen-moreton-menzies-and-mythology/>
- 3 In Maroon, the ALP was eliminated before the final count and the final two-party-preferred decision was between the LNP and One Nation.
- 4 <http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/employment>