

Essay:

# Disruptive influences

Author:

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*The present is a hinge on which the past and the future swing.*

– Raymond Evans<sup>1</sup>

**F**or those touched by the perverse blessing of a youth spent in interesting times, the echoes of those years are likely to reverberate for a lifetime. We are all products of our personal histories, of events that mark us and those we transcend. But formative years littered with the sounds of a turbulent, divisive, angry, claustrophobic, frustrating and exhilarating time linger in our personal echo chamber and shape responses in ways that may be hard for others to understand.

Australia's new leaders spent their youth in such turbulent years and are a product of it. Many found themselves, by accident, birth or fate, living north of the twenty-seventh parallel with front-row seats, and the occasional bit part, in a brawl without precedent in this country that began in the 1960s and raged until 1989 and finally petered out a decade later. They learnt about caution and courage, compromise and opportunism. Queensland's *ancien régime* took a long time to die and its demise was littered with almost Shakespearean tragedy and triumph.

The beginning of the end coincided with the coming of age of the now governor-general designate, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, four premiers, scores of senior public servants, many academics, at least five vice-chancellors and two chancellors, numerous judges and lawyers, some of the country's most influential journalists and Indigenous leaders, and a disproportionate number of actors, writers and musicians ... and countless others.

Exposure to outrageous abuses of power, petty vindictiveness, wilful ignorance and self-serving denial is likely to fuel outrage and a heightened sense of justice and, if the punishments are not too high, a determination to change things.

There is a tendency for those who saw Queensland in the 1970s and '80s from a distance as an embarrassing national joke – simply the product of police corruption, tawdry sex, draconian regulations and incompetent politicians. All were there in abundance, but they were the symptoms not the cause. There was more at stake –

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Evans, *A History of Qld*, Cambridge Uni Press, 2007

systems and networks designed to ensure that things remained the same. A cynical abuse of power seeped like summer sweat from the pores of the body politic tainting all who came in contact with it – those who accommodated it and those who tried to challenge it. The odour was pervasive, but if you held your nose you could convince yourself that life in the Sunshine State was beautiful one day, perfect the next.

What was at stake during those turbulent years was more than the manifestations of human frailty and expedient opportunism. From this distance it is clear that it was a desperate attempt by a crafty old order of authoritarian rural fundamentalism to hold onto power. The Tammany Hall Labor Party at Breakfast Creek and the faction-ridden, timorous Liberals were no real challenge and the radicals who earnestly speculated on life after the revolution, an amusing distraction. It was a regime that rewarded some, penalised others but treated most with cool indifference and disdain. It was no coincidence that Queenslanders were the least educated and lowest paid. The state was accustomed to being poor; the money for bribes came relatively late. Ray Whitrod, the police commissioner from 1970 to 1976 and one of the regime's higher profile victims, wrote in his memoir of 'a society crisscrossed by a network of obligations and pre-arranged mutual benefits'.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone with social and political antennae who spent any time in Queensland during those decades could sense that there was something rotten. Although it was pervasive it was hard to draw on a whiteboard with a sign 'arrow points to defective part'. The system was apparently impervious; the media nibbled but couldn't grasp the complexity or dent its corrosive influence. Gary Crooke who spent three years as counsel assisting the Fitzgerald Inquiry, charged with investigating 'possible illegal activities', now likens the task to that of the vets who come to his property to see if a cow is pregnant, hand in glove up a back passage groping for something, somewhere.

When in 1987 Tony Fitzgerald QC was appointed to head the royal commission there was little expectation that he would lance the boil that had been festering for decades. He had been a boy from Sandgate who after graduating from the University of Queensland was let into the clubby world of the law in Brisbane. He was not the son of one of the establishment legal families, but smart, capable and trustworthy – a highly respected cleanskin with a keen sense of history. Once appointed he grabbed the moment and pushed the legal boundaries. As Fitzgerald's team of investigators combed through cabinet documents and police records, cracked the code of the police commissioner's diary and mined the records of witnesses who decided to tell all, the whiteboards in his office soon filled with the missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of networks, corruption and abuse of power. The defective parts were clearer – at a time when the median house price in Brisbane was \$40,000, nearly \$2 million had changed hands in police bribes alone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ray Whitrod, *Before I Sleep*, UQP, 2004

<sup>3</sup> Fitzgerald, G., (Tony) E, QC, *Report of a Commission of Enquiry Pursuant to Orders in Council*, Department of Attorney General, Brisbane, June 1989

The pervasiveness of the dysfunction was not easily fixed. It was not just a matter of charging two hundred and fifty and finding more than half of them guilty including high profile police, businessmen and former government ministers, or passing legislation and implementing administrative reforms. Although the system was broken in countless ways it was also resilient. As those who challenged the status quo found at some personal cost, it would also fight to preserve the old ways of doing things in which everyone knew their place and rumour, innuendo and social networks were as influential as outright corruption and dishonesty.

It has taken years for the political and institutional reforms that began as a result of Fitzgerald's recommendations to mature and bear fruit. In that time the population has doubled, education levels skyrocketed, accountability mechanisms now set the national benchmark and the economy gives the nation succour. The transformation of the state's political process can be measured by Kevin Rudd's election last year – Queensland's first postwar prime minister – and Anna Bligh's rise to become its first female premier. As former premier Peter Beattie quipped, 'Imagine, a factionally non-aligned Queensland egghead as a Labor prime minister and a left-leaning woman as premier. Thirty years ago they made it almost impossible for people like them to even join the party.'

**J**ust as we are products of our personal histories, places cannot escape their past. The past that has haunted Queensland is cluttered with memories from the 'ragged edge of empire' where 'everything depended on taking, holding and exploiting the natural environment'.<sup>4</sup> When the first white settlers arrived about five generations ago, there were at least two hundred thousand Indigenous people whose forebears had lived there since before the last Ice Age. For much of the time since white occupation it has been agrarian, sectarian, ill-educated, misogynist, notable for long periods of single party government and politicians with one hand in the till and the other on the ballot box.<sup>5</sup>

Brisbane's settlement in 1823 as a destination for the most intractable convicts marked Queensland as a place of extremes: the 'flogginest' penal colony where 'vice in its most appalling forms' flourished; the most murderous frontier; and the destination on the edge of 'civilised consciousness' for the largest non-pauperised, disproportionately Irish and German, nineteenth century emigration of workers selected on the basis of their 'physical usefulness'.<sup>6</sup> By the time it won self-government in 1859 the colony had a chip on its shoulder, a scarcely surprising reaction against the frequent, censorious and critical oversight of southern journalists and do-gooders.

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<sup>4</sup> Evans, Raymond *A History of Queensland*, CUP, 2007 p 23

<sup>5</sup> McQueen, Humphrey, 'Queensland: A State of Mind', *Meanjin*, Vol 36, No1, April 1979, pp 41 – 52

<sup>6</sup> Evans, Raymond *A History of Queensland*, CUP, 2007 p 59

When my great grandfather and his family arrived from Germany in 1862 they were given a £17 credit to acquire sixteen hectares of scrub on the edge of the Darling Downs. A close-knit religious community helped compensate for the lack of sustenance from the land. Their settlement was on the less fertile edge of the ten million hectares that forty squatters had claimed for themselves a couple of decades earlier. By 1876, when my grandfather was born in a dirt-floored slab hut, the squatters were living in gracious Queenslanders with wide verandas, attended by Aboriginal maids and stockmen – yet still only paid a peppercorn rent for their vast tracts of land. It was a tough, raw and unequal environment in which entitlement eventually encountered civil and political agitation, riots and strikes, and led to the formation of the Labor Party and briefly, for the first time in the world, a Labor government.

By Federation a truce of sorts had evolved. For much of the century a pragmatic rural Labor Party held power, governing with the active support of the Catholic Church, but without a parliamentary upper house. Thousands of immigrants and their native-born children like my grandfather eked out a living in the hot, harsh land; Aborigines were increasingly confined to missions and reserves; and a handful of wealthy landholders benefited from the rural economy and the food, beverage and tobacco manufacturing industries it spawned. For decades these factories drenched Brisbane and other regional centres in the smells of beer brewing, milk separating, biscuits cooking, rum distilling, sugar cane burning, peanuts roasting, tobacco curing, timber milling, fruit rotting and saleyards reeking with the smell of cattle on their way to slaughter.

Land was and is the key to wealth in Queensland – claiming it, farming it, developing it, mining it. Yet small-time rural production dominated the economy for much longer than the other states which were quicker to industrialise, diversify and draw migrants from around the world. When tourism, property investment and mining began to broaden the state's economic base the regulatory routines of government proved inadequate. The time-honoured methods of mates and deals, in the club and by newcomers in white shoes, delivered personal wealth but tarnished both the perception of the emerging industries and the state itself.

In 1957 after the Labor Party split the Country Party won office. It had spent a long time in opposition and in power began to apply and refine many of the self-serving techniques it had watched Labor implement over decades – a zonal electoral system that kept people in the regions and the bush happy by counting their votes more than once, heavy-handed ways of stopping dissent, narrow economic horizons and an instinctive protection of the interests of cronies and mates.

With the change of government the Catholic Church's dominance of the education system eroded and from 1958 to 1962 more than thirty new state high schools were

opened<sup>7</sup> – including schools in the southern Brisbane suburb of Inala and Atherton, in the state’s far north, which counted amongst their first pupils two boys who later became premiers, Wayne Goss and Peter Beattie. By the 1970s still only 12 percent of Queenslanders, well below the national average, had completed at least nine years of school<sup>8</sup>. Ray Whitrod was astonished to discover when he surveyed the force that most of the state’s police had only graduated from primary school<sup>9</sup>. For many years Mike Ahern was the only member of the ruling party who had been to university, where he studied agricultural science<sup>10</sup>.

**F**or the twenty years until Mike Ahern eventually deposed him on December 1, 1987 Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen held power with an iron-fisted mix of bravado, patronage and tunnel vision wrapped in folksy ‘don’t you worry about that’ certainty. Bjelke-Petersen was a product of the same part of poor rural Queensland as my forebears – indeed I have a vivid memory of jumping on a trampoline at his home, Bethany, as a child.

Before the sheen of power distorted perceptions, people did not have a lot of good to say about Bjelke-Petersen but, as Garrison Keillor reminds us, country Lutherans have turned dour criticism of those who move beyond the tight confines of the church community into an art-form. In Kingaroy they remembered a scrapper who made a small fortune clearing the bush while living rough, but whose business methods left something to be desired. As his premiership progressed it was clear to those who, like me thanks to a childhood in a manse had absorbed the sociology of the Lutheran Church, that Bjelke-Petersen had learnt a lot about how to survive from watching the church’s factions at play.

His election as premier and leader of the Country Party in 1968,<sup>11</sup> after two unremarkable decades in Parliament, was the result of a close ballot following the unexpected death of Jack Pizzey. Bjelke-Petersen set about applying the lessons he had learnt on the land, at church, on the council, in opposition and on the backbench, to the highest office in the state. He was determined to hang on to power despite mounting concern about his conflicts of interest. In 1970 a party room no confidence motion was initiated by those who saw the need for a code of conduct to prevent ministers taking personal advantage from government decisions. This came to a head after Bjelke-Petersen failed to censure several ministers who had happily pocketed preferential shares dispensed by Comalco, the alumina company that was already

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<sup>7</sup> Dept of Education website on anniversaries Education Queensland, A Chronology of Education in Queensland, accessed June 2008 <http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/state/chronology/>

<sup>8</sup> McQueen, Humphrey, ‘Queensland: A State of Mind’, *Meanjin*, Vol 36, No1, April 1979, pp 41 – 52

<sup>9</sup> Ray Whitrod, *Before I Sleep*, UQP

<sup>10</sup> Paul Reynolds, *Lock, Stock and Barrel*, UQP, 2005

<sup>11</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 243

infamous for benefitting from the destruction of the Aboriginal settlement of Mapoon on Cape York.<sup>12</sup> Bjelke-Petersen saw nothing wrong with casting two proxies and his own vote for himself. He survived in the job by the narrowest margin, and the dye was set.

Leadership did not come naturally to Bjelke-Petersen, but when his canny party president Robert Sparkes identified the ABC's political reporter and Vietnam veteran Allen Callaghan as the premier's ideal press secretary the transformation of the 'bumbling incompetent politician' into a 'tough-looking conservative who could talk out a journalist'<sup>13</sup> began. Callaghan's appointment in 1971 marked the beginning of the enduring era of public relations driven politics that continues to this day.

Bjelke-Petersen was not a promising media talent, but Callaghan recognised that his inarticulateness was perfectly pitched for most of the audience – just as, for a time, George W. Bush suited his. The routines seem trite now, but in the early 1970s their mastery of the media was breathtaking: Sunday-night press releases, short grabs for television, weekly radio broadcasts, granting and denying access, all doled out in homespun, ungrammatical language. Mockery by critics – especially those from down south – was perversely affirming, not a cause for concern. Callaghan encouraged his boss to describe talking to reporters as 'feeding the chooks' which amused the electorate and put journalists on the back foot. In a flash much of the media had become accomplices in the government's propaganda machine. Fifteen years later when Callaghan and his wife, who had both become senior public servants, were jailed for misappropriating public funds it was clear that both the media minder and his charge had had a lot to learn.

**A**ustralia had not been immune to the wave of protest that swept the world in the 1960s. People were shot in America and Europe, but in this country truncheons were the preferred tools of police who routinely removed their badges before setting off to enforce law and order. Hundreds of thousands protested against Australian involvement in the Vietnam War and agitated for civil rights.

In Brisbane activism was based at the University of Queensland, the city's only university, tucked into one of the river's many elbows at St Lucia. There students whose Catholic childhoods had been turned upside down by the liberalising ethos of Vatican II debated the finer points of theology and revolutionary ideology in the subtropical winter sunshine. The Labor Party and trade unions had been so scarified by the split a decade earlier that the left had a weak organisational base and despite powerful Labor mayors, was largely irrelevant to the social and intellectual life of the city. The Communist Party remained active on campus and a bouquet of far left

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<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 305

<sup>13</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 246

parties briefly flowered advertising their competing claims on posters plastered on noticeboards, their clanky initials daisies in a chain of memories – VAC, SOS, SDA, URG, NSM, CLCC, RSA, RSSA, RSP, SU, SMG. The students who watched what was happening interstate and around the world – the revolution was televised – produced their own leaders including Dan O'Neill, Brian Laver and Peter Wertheim, and set out to 'infiltrate' other institutions. O'Neill remembered its inner history as 'one long year that began as the year 1965 and just kept going right through till the end of 1972'.<sup>14</sup>

In 1967 Wayne Goss was one of a handful of students in the senior year at Inala High, a school opened a few years earlier to service the housing-commission suburb in the backblocks of Brisbane. A girl in the year below skipped school to go on the first big anti-Vietnam rally at Roma Street, and although Goss's father was active in the treacherous hand-to-hand combat of Labor Party politics, protest and street marches were a world away to him. 'The girl got into trouble. I was surprised by what she had done, it was the first I'd really heard of it,' he recalled. Later, as an articled clerk and part-time university student he was drawn into one of the more entertaining tributaries of protest, Yeti - a ratbag theatre group that owed more to Monty Python than Karl Marx. Their performances kept audiences guessing as they impersonated police or soldiers and on one occasion even showered the unlucky ones with front row seats with pig entrails, designed to give a performance (unwelcome) verisimilitude.<sup>15</sup> 'It was fun, but I drifted away. I couldn't really see the point when the Revolutionary Socialist Party split on the role of the party after the revolution...' Goss recalled recently.

Talk of revolution seems even more bizarre now than it was then, but the intensity of the times and the shadow of the Cold War's collapsing dominos encouraged an apocalyptic response. When the South African rugby team toured Australia in July 1971 the racially selected Springboks were shadowed by passionate anti-apartheid protests. Rugby Union is the preferred football code for old, private-school Brisbane and Bjelke-Petersen declared a state of emergency on July 14, 1971, ostensibly to ensure that there was an appropriate ground for the game.<sup>16</sup> The declaration revoked civil liberties, gave police extraordinary powers and inflamed the already volatile protest movement. On the evening of Thursday July 22 five hundred police confronted four hundred protesters including another future premier, Peter Beattie. 'Even though I was the one who had been assaulted, I was charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest...I will never forgive or forget what came next, I was "verballed" by the police who manufactured the most incredible statements.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> O'Neill, Dan, 'The rise and fall of student consciousness', *Semper*, University of Queensland Students' Union, pp 10 – 13, 36, May 1976

<sup>15</sup> Jamie Walker, *Goss*, UQP, 1995 p 25

<sup>16</sup> R Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985; Ray Whitrod, *Before I Sleep*, UQP, 2004; Cowan, Zelman, *A Public Life*, Meigunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006

<sup>17</sup> Hall, Allan, 'Springbok Tour', *Rewind Television*, ABC Television, broadcast, September 26, 2004, available at abc.net.au

The protests resumed after the Saturday game and an even more violent mêlée outside the Tower Mill Motel erupted. Police had been brought in from the country to maintain law and order. For days police anger focussed on dissatisfaction with the conditions at the army base where they were staying: they wanted to be paid more and fed better and resented what they considered police commissioner's 'soft' handling of demonstrators. At the height of the altercation Whitrod yelled over a loudspeaker to tell the police to 'come back'. But they didn't. Twenty students were hospitalised, many others arrested and bundled into vans to the city watchhouse.<sup>18</sup>

The following week the university went 'on strike', police were rewarded with a pay rise and the government won two by-elections, a former detective, Don Lane, entered parliament and for the first time in fifty-six years the sugar town of Maryborough did not elect a Labor member.<sup>19</sup> A month into his job Callaghan had tangible evidence of the electoral value of his protégé's new style of tough talk – and action. The first draft of a primer of political tactics, in which police were paid extra to be the handmaids of an increasingly authoritarian government, had been written. The confrontation was a political bleeding for everyone touched by it. For the frightened young people distress about the confrontational politics was exacerbated by the violence. The outrage lingered for decades.

In any Shakespearean drama there are characters whose role is to speak truth to power, but whose flaws see them outwitted, reluctantly compromised and destined to suffer, despite their essential decency. In these tumultuous times that role fell to two men who had moved to Brisbane in 1970 for prestigious jobs in already distinguished careers. Police commissioner Ray Whitrod and Zelman Cowan, vice-chancellor of the University of Queensland, had little inkling of the intensity of events that would engulf them for the next seven years.

The two men were Oxbridge educated, Enlightenment liberals who favoured evidence-based decision making and their liberalism left a mark on everyone associated with the city's only university in those days. They were not Queenslanders and had few natural allies in a small, parochial world. On one side outspoken student radicals were agitating for profound change, on the other a poorly educated, tightly bound police force resisted even minor change, both closely watched by a government well served by the status quo and its gossipy networks of influence and information.

In his opening address in the over-scaled, faux Oxbridge quadrangle at St Lucia, Cowan wished for an 'exciting, uncomfortable, disturbing and enriching university

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<sup>18</sup> Evans, Raymond & Ferrier, Carole (eds), *Radical Brisbane – an unruly history*, Vulgar Press, West End, 2004

<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985

life'.<sup>20</sup> When it came true within a year he was shaken, angry and weary, 'ground between two millstones of the tumultuous student caper and the vehemence of public feeling'. Cowan had accepted the task of expanding the somewhat moribund university and ensuring it no longer had the lowest per capita funding in the nation. Whitrod had an equally grand task: the modernisation of the police force. Cowan confronted a hostile media, a cabinet with no time for 'bloody academics' and a divided university community.

Whitrod's attempts to reform the police had some media and political support at first, but soon drew a visceral and heavy-handed response from those who were likely to lose status and influence (and ill-gotten gains). At first he was surprised when uninvited ambulance officers and doctors arrived ringing his front doorbell urgently at all hours of the night, but by the time a tip truck load of gravel was dumped in the front yard of his house in St Lucia he knew what he was up against and that his opponents would stoop to almost anything to make his lot harder.<sup>21</sup>

Both men sensed the limits of their power. The Springbok protest demonstrated just how limited it was. Cowan inflamed the government by visiting the injured and incarcerated students, but failed to placate the protesters. Whitrod was undermined by a premier who ignored his advice. In their memoirs both men write movingly about the breakdowns they suffered as a result.

With the election of the Whitlam government in December 1972 there was less to protest about: Vietnam was over, censorship lifted, university was free, and continuous assessment spread the workload across the whole year. The university slipped into a comfortable liberalism and new preoccupations emerged – feminism, Aboriginal rights, uranium- and sand-mining, East Timor. These subjects were pursued with gusto in the pages of the student newspaper which I co-edited in 1976. It was hard to find the right pitch for the paper, especially in the first half of the year as the significance and scale of Malcolm Fraser's victory seeped in. Like editors of student newspapers everywhere we were determined to push the boundaries. The president of the student union was happy to sign off on every issue of *Semper*, but negotiating each page with the country printer who would say every week, 'you know in your heart of hearts Julianne, you shouldn't be publishing this stuff', demanded more persuasion.

'Maintaining the rage' seemed somewhat futile after Fraser's convincing victory and although his government did not reintroduce university fees, it ignored a recommendation to increase the TEAS student allowance to the level of the dole. Most students did not qualify for this support because of their parent's income (the university was still overwhelmingly the preserve of private-school alumni), but the absurdity of people being paid more to not work than to study was sufficient to ignite the spark of protest that O'Neill had predicted a few months earlier was ready to

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<sup>20</sup> Cowan, Zelman, *A Public Life*, Meigunyah Press, Melbourne, 2006 p 269

<sup>21</sup> Ray Whitrod, *Before I Sleep*, UQP, 2004

flame again.

A march to protest the level of student allowances was planned for July 29 – the first big rally of the year. I remember it was a bright sunny winter day, the kind Brisbane does best. The cheerful crowd made its way along Coronation Drive beside the river until a phalanx of police descended and announced that it was an illegal demonstration and demanded we disperse. All of a sudden the whiff of fear mixed with the smell of biscuits from the Arnott's factory. Police were determined to break up the crowd, knocking placards and tugging at the banner. Rosemarie Severin, a sociology student on TEAS who had decided on the spur of the moment to join her first march, by chance found herself holding a corner of the banner for a friend. She was in the front row. As the cloud of police emerged she held onto her corner for dear life, until an inspector biffed her over the head and she fell to the ground.<sup>22</sup>

It was one moment in a million, but captured by television cameras and broadcast that night, it assumed a life of its own. Severin was embarrassed and upset and unsuccessfully tried to avoid media attention. A couple of days later Cowan and a delegation of students met Whitrod, who promised to look into the incident. The Premier did not like the sound of this and announced there would be no investigation, the students were simply out of order, and marches were banned.

The TEAS march was the first to flout the ban that galvanised Brisbane for several years and made Dan O'Neill's wish for resurgence in political activism come true. The new battle lines were drawn when in September 1977 two months before a state election the Premier declared, that any gathering required permission from the police and there was no right of appeal: 'Nobody including the Communist Party is going to turn the streets of Brisbane into a forum. Protest groups need not bother applying for permits ... because they won't be granted.'<sup>23</sup>

Brisbane was small enough so that even in a pre-internet age news of marches and rallies spread with astonishing speed, thousands would gather in King George Square waving banners demanding the right to free speech and assembly and women's rights, Aboriginal rights, land rights and opposing uranium and sand mining. By late 1977 the city was infected by a political virus which took years to work out of the system. The airwaves became a vast Government 101 seminar room with discussion about the enduring importance of the separation of powers, freedom of speech and assembly. Students of government, law and history could see what happened when democratic theory was not applied. As lawyer Peter Applegarth commented, 'Upholders of a traditional and cherished right are portrayed as revolutionaries, while the real outlaws are a posse parading as a government.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> MacCallum, Alexandra, Rosemarie Severin, Personal Stories: Women's Activism, *Queensland Review*, Vol 14, No 1, 2007

<sup>23</sup> Evans, Raymond & Ferrier, Carole (eds), *Radical Brisbane – an unruly history*, Vulgar Press, West End, 2004; Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 572

<sup>24</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 575

Whitrod and Cowan had left the state the year before but the values they espoused marked the new front line – this was not a battle over a hypothetical revolutionary future, but a struggle to reassert basic liberal, democratic values and practices in a society which had allowed them to be jettisoned in the interests of political expediency.

It was clear that despite the excitement of this direct action it played to the government's strengths, law and order was a guaranteed vote winner in the state. For the growing band of critics of the government there was recognition that it was time to get smarter, to use the law and the media not just placards and rallies. The university radio station 4ZZ had begun in 1975 and broadcast news and music that would otherwise not be heard<sup>25</sup> and the law reform of the Whitlam years showed that the legal system was not necessarily passive. Mark Plunkett, then a student in the university's proudly black letter law school but with close ties to the reformers in the Labor Party, talked to Wayne Goss and others about ways of using the law to challenge the police assault of Severin. After the Premier used cabinet to overrule an inquiry into the assault, Plunkett and Goss concluded that it was arguable that Bjelke-Petersen had conspired with his colleagues to breach the Police Act, and brought a private prosecution against him. 'Of course we lost, but every time we lost, in the Magistrate's Court, the Supreme Court and then the High Court, we were on the TV news and the front pages of the papers, pointing out how these people behaved, their lack of respect for the law and normal processes,' Goss recalled. He and a group of self-styled Labor lawyers with a particular interest in civil and Aboriginal rights had begun to meet regularly in the long bar of the Grosvenor Hotel in George Street. They applied the lessons they had seen Callaghan use and took it in turns to despatch telexes to newsrooms challenging the myriad government decisions which breached fundamental rights. With a media megaphone they assumed an importance greater than their numbers. Criminal lawyer Terry O'Gorman's hoarse-voiced advocacy of civil liberties became a ubiquitous part of news bulletins for years.

By the time the case against Bjelke-Petersen in relation to Severin's assault had reached the courts, Brisbane had been galvanised by months and months of illegal demonstrations. The scale of the demonstrations and the intensity of the police reaction, and the political rhetoric were unlike anything that had come before. Two weeks after the Premier announced that there would be no appeals against the ban, several hundred student protesters attempted to march from King George Square to Parliament House. Both Adelaide and Albert Streets adjacent to the square were blocked by seven hundred police arraigned eight deep. More than twenty protesters were arrested as they attempted to leave.<sup>26</sup> A month later on a warm October

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<sup>25</sup> Stafford, Andrew, *Pig City*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2006

<sup>26</sup> Evans, Raymond, *A History of Queensland*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2007; Raymond & Ferrier, Carole (eds), *Radical Brisbane – an unruly history*, Vulgar Press, West End, 2004; Ross

afternoon an even bigger crowd alive with the chant, 'Queensland police state, demand the right to demonstrate' descended on the square. Four hundred and eighteen people were pushed and shoved into paddy wagons and taken to the watchhouse in Stanley Street South Brisbane – and were still being processed the following day. I remember arriving there on the Saturday with a tray of sandwiches and being surprised by the number of people waiting for their friends and children to be released.

The virus had infected the whole city; those involved were not just the usual suspects. As the protests continued, and many of those charged opted to fight their cases in court, it touched many families; protest was no longer confined to the university – there was something fundamental at stake. The ban reached a high point of absurdity when a Bundaberg vet was refused a permit to walk his dog late at night because he said he intended to carry a placard: 'The majority are not omnipotent'.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless Bjelke-Petersen's reading of the electorate was accurate and his government increased its majority in that election; by early 1979 the ban had served its purpose and was quietly jettisoned. When Terry O'Gorman questioned Bjelke-Petersen at the Fitzgerald Inquiry about why he used the police in this way, the former premier simply replied, 'It was just politics.'<sup>28</sup>

The drama of the demonstrations, arrests and the fury of not being heard provided a backdrop to cabinet decisions that year that had consequences long after the noise subsided and students whose state-based professional registration required that they stay became yuppies renovating cute weatherboard houses on the steep slopes of Brisbane's inner suburbs, and thousands of others sought refuge in a more normal, less watchful and aggressive climate down south or overseas.

It was a pivotal year. In 1977 the rest of the country became convinced that Queenslanders were, as Gough Whitlam had famously remarked a couple of years earlier, 'different'. The cabinet records released this year provide a glimpse into just how different it was.<sup>29</sup> It was the year that nervous jokes about Queensland being a 'police state' began to win currency. As he was leaving Whitrod had agreed that the term was apt. It became more so once Terry Lewis replaced him and corrupt police again moved to the centre of power.

'Police state' is a term easily devalued by overuse. As George Orwell noted in his famous essay on political language, 'inflated style itself is a kind of euphemism. A mass of words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up

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Fitzgerald; Raymond Evans Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985

<sup>27</sup> O'Gorman, Terry, Queensland Council of Civil Liberties Newsletter, May 2006

<sup>28</sup> O'Gorman, Terry, Queensland Council of Civil Liberties Newsletter, May 2006

<sup>29</sup> Solomon, David, Queensland State Archives, *Cabinet Minutes 1977 – Important Decisions*, A short summary of some of the major decisions of the 1977 Queensland Cabinet, released 1 January 2008

all the details.<sup>30</sup> The pervasive sense of being watched made it seem tangible. In a city that prided itself on being a big country town watching was easy – family, school, church and sporting networks fed into the matrix. The stories are legion and most are banal – of police who knew your name, or were seen jotting down number plates outside meetings and parties – but the threat felt real. Whitrod wrote that he felt so unsafe ‘despite being the top policeman in the state I had taken to locking my bedroom door at night and keeping a firearm with me’.

The government preferred the moniker Sunshine State. In 1977 new reflective number plates bearing this slogan were introduced and the commissioner who preferred the old ways of policing ensured that cabinet revoked study leave entitlements for police. A Coalition government in Canberra did not dampen Bjelke-Petersen’s resolve to set his own path, even to the material disadvantage of those living in the state – Queensland would take its own course on Aboriginal affairs, environment, family court, drugs, referenda and foreign ownership. It even mandated employment discrimination against women. The year 1977 was also the year cabinet supported a slew of commercial developments without any proper process – including the Iwasaki Resort south of Yeppoon and converting Hamilton Island’s grazing lease to tourism – and put money into the Greenvale nickel mine and backed coal prospecting in Central Queensland.

It has taken thirty years for the minutes of these cabinet meetings to be released, but almost immediately they were the subject of rumour. Media questions were dismissed with a patronising ‘don’t you worry about that’, but the minutes reveal that the gossip mill was sensitively attuned to issues of propriety and accountability which would roll on for years.

Cabinet was the clearing house for scores of minor matters, even the approval of mid-level appointments that in a more mature system should have been determined solely by merit or seniority. There was no instinctive understanding of confidentiality or the fundamental principle of the separation of powers. The decision not to appoint Justice Jim Douglas as the state’s chief justice in 1981 illustrated there was little respect for the boundaries about the appropriate use of information to settle scores<sup>31</sup>. According to evidence presented to the Fitzgerald Inquiry, cabinet was told that Douglas had voted Labor in 1972 – information gleaned by the local member Don Lane, a former police officer, who was happy to use it once he became a minister. The privacy of the ballot box was compromised, and partisan politics determined an appointment that should have been made on merit.

In this vindictive ‘for us or agin us’ world, the winner took all and the rules were changed at will to enervate any opposition. After the Country Party rebranded

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<sup>30</sup> Orwell, George ‘Politics and the English Language’, *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1950

<sup>31</sup> Coaldrake, Peter, *Working the System*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1989

itself National in 1974 the more prescient members of the Liberal Party sensed that the first moves in a death roll had begun, since its partner wanted the cities as well. Almost every response by the Liberals was wrong and its weakness was punished. As Cowan and Whitrod had found, liberal values and institutions meant little for those who were at best wily, and at worst corrupt.

Labor could not begin to mount a credible response. In the 1974 federal double dissolution it lost a swag of seats in Queensland, the year before it only managed to win eleven seats in the State Parliament and even lost party status and privileges after Ed Casey defected and became an independent.<sup>32</sup> The ready explanation for the decimation was the gerrymander, but the party had become a minefield of obligation and patronage, perversely comfortable with failure. It was certainly not looking for new blood.

During the most turbulent years of civil disobedience, except for the front line stalwart Senator George Georges, Labor was practically irrelevant. Even on campus in the mid-'70s while the earnest boys who dominated the Labor Club imagined a career in politics for themselves and practised by calling each other 'senator', the party failed to engage with the *realpolitik*. That was happening on the streets and in impassioned debates in legal-aid offices, alternative media newsrooms, women's refuges, weatherboard share houses and pubs.

Peter Beattie recalled that he joined Young Labor briefly in the early 1970s but despaired of the meetings where 'kids sat around talking crap'. Kevin Rudd was in his last year at Nambour High in the state's conservative heartland in 1974 when he first started attending Young Labor meetings in the cane growers' hall, and joined the party seven years later. Wayne Goss's attempts to join the party were rebuffed for several years. The dismissal of the Whitlam government underlined just how serious party politics could be and after hearing the news on his car radio early in the afternoon of November 11, 1975 Goss drove to the city and joined the spontaneous protest. As the march reached the Liberal Party headquarters in Edward Street he remembers looking up at and seeing John Moore, the state party president on a balcony toasting the furious crowd with a glass of champagne. Class hatred was alive and well. Immediately after the march Goss drove to the ALP's Breakfast Creek headquarters and insisted that he be allowed to join.

While Goss's political activities in the following years found their focus in the pre-occupations of the Labor lawyers who hung out at the Grosvenor Hotel – civil liberties, Aboriginal justice and legal aid – Beattie was drawn to the reform movement led by the historian Denis Murphy. It was here that the paths of the two men who would become Labor premiers first crossed. Beattie and Murphy had embarked on

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<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald, Ross, *A History of Queensland, from 1915 to the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985 p 267

the arduous process of rebuilding the party, recruiting new members and potential parliamentarians. Goss was the second articulate young lawyer on the recruiters' list of 'a butcher a baker and a candle stick maker and a lawyer' – but the first to accept their challenge to really try to change the state's politics. He stood in the electorate that covered his childhood home which he won in 1983 with Liberal preferences, becoming one of a dozen new Labor members.

Beattie recalls the hard slog of reform: 'It was easy to feel depressed. It was dreadful. The party was full of drunks and hacks, almost no women, just blokes who expected to be handed seats. It was a fiefdom. They hated what we were doing and went to extraordinary lengths to protect their mates – pizzas and ambulances we didn't order would arrive at all hours, even a load of dirt in the front yard – it was mob behaviour. They bagged us as academics, but a couple of years before they would have thought I was working-class trash. There were plenty of young opportunists who didn't like what we were doing either, people who were happy to ride the wave after federal intervention began to transform the party, but didn't want to get involved in the really ugly stuff early on.'

If Labor was irrelevant, the Liberals were outfoxed. When the Coalition ruptured, after the Nationals refused to agree to a public accounts committee – a decision that political scientists now attribute to a fundamental misunderstanding of the parliamentary process by Bjelke-Petersen – the price of principle became clear. Two Liberals were happy to leave their party and join the Nationals, including Don Lane whose election victory in 1971 was assisted by the Springbok demonstration and Brian Austin. Ambition trumped principle – their fatal flaw – but at a price.<sup>33</sup> Few grieved when they were among the former members of parliament jailed after being found guilty of fraud in the Fitzgerald wash-up.

Even within the National Party there were seeds of disquiet. The aggression and lack of process troubled some, the wilful ignorance and readiness to pander to the most reactionary interests distressed others. Mike Ahern was the scion of the old style Country Party. His father had been the party's president during Frank Nicklin's premiership and when he was elected at the age of twenty-five, he reluctantly grew accustomed to being called 'Jack's son'. His pedigree and education marked him as being from a different mould and Bjelke-Petersen went to extraordinary lengths to sideline him.

Ahern was sworn in as Premier in December 1987 after several days of high farce when Joh Bjelke-Petersen sent conflicting note to the governor and for a time refused to vacate his office. Once he had his feet under the premier's desk on the fifteenth floor of the Executive Building which had only ever been occupied by Bjelke-Petersen, Ahern began the process of modernising the parliament and public administration –

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Reynolds, *Lock Stock & Barrel, A Political Biography of Mike Ahern*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002

parliamentary committees and processes for appointments were established. But turning around the patterns of practise that had served the party well was not easy. Ahern publicly committed to introducing the Fitzgerald reforms, 'lock, stock and barrel'. Russ Hinze the obese minister for local government, whose dealings with developers earned its own section in the six hundred and four page report saw this as weakness and muttered to anyone who would listen, 'More like hook, line and sinker.' The politicians facing legal charges wanted indemnity from prosecution; something their leader was not prepared to countenance. Three months later on September 25, 1989 Ahern was deposed in a party room coup. The former minister Yvonne Chapman triumphantly waved her finger in Ahern's face and said, 'We'll see who runs the state now, the Premier or Fitzgerald.' Just over two months later Premier Russell Cooper lost. Fitzgerald won and a new era began.

**B**y the 1980s the notion that Queensland was different had become accepted wisdom – possibly a product of the weather. After all the British Medical Association had held a congress in Brisbane specially to consider whether 'whites' could cope in the tropics.<sup>34</sup> As the government bulldozed its way through one crisis after another the media needed commentators who could make sense of the events, explain established practise elsewhere and illuminate the significance of the shortcomings in the process, the abuse of power. Experts from interstate were easily discredited, and outspoken local critics closely associated with old issues – civil liberties, police, the lack of an upper house, separation of powers, conflict of interest – were dismissed by a premier with a mantra, 'he would say that wouldn't he'.

Peter Coaldrake, now the vice-chancellor of Queensland University of Technology, was one of those who filled the gap. He was an academic which gave him authority in the media, but marked him in the eyes of a government that used 'academic' as a pejorative. More importantly, he was a Queenslander and that counted a lot. 'The first time I met Russ Hinze I was researching my book *Working the System*, and I wanted to talk to him about how the cabinet worked,' Coaldrake recalled. 'As soon as I entered the room he got stuck into me, "bloody academics, what would you know". But as the conversation progressed we realised he knew my dad. In the end I sent him the draft and he made some fantastic comments, as did Mike Ahern. Putting the book together made me realise just how crook the system was.'

Coaldrake grew up in Aramac, a dot on the map literally in the middle of the state, in cattle country that achieved some fame for its dinosaurs after fossil remains of a *Muttaborrasaurus* were found nearby. Like many of us who grew up in manses, he has a chameleon-like ability to be an insider and an outsider at the same time. His education at James Cook University meant he was an unknown quantity in Brisbane – valuable anonymity that was shared with the growing number of political scientists from all around Australia who found themselves at Griffith University in the 1980s.

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<sup>34</sup> McQueen, Humphrey, 'Queensland: A State of Mind', *Meanjin*, Vol 36, No1, April 1979, pp 41 – 52

His colleagues there chided him for his measured, conservative responses, but he knew how to 'talk Queensland' and his critique was heard.

When Griffith was established in the mid-'70s in a nature reserve in the city's south it drew on some of the most innovative thinking about higher education at the time, a contemporary manifestation of Sir Samuel Griffith's advice decades earlier that 'something quite different to Oxbridge'<sup>35</sup> was needed. The founding vice-chancellor John Willett had thrown down the gauntlet in Australia's most divided city and was somewhat surprised to find that 'heresy and scepticism were alive and well'. He argued, 'The university should not be a slavish handmaid of the status quo, a factory fitting out men and women to serve the community within present values and organisations.' Willett's ambition was supported by his chancellor, Theodore Bray the recently retired and highly regarded managing director of Queensland Newspapers. Bray took no prisoners when challenged in the clubby world of the Brisbane upper middle class. After a Supreme Court judge chided him for running a 'communist uni out there', Bray responded, 'Well if we are that may be a good thing – in contrast to some other universities.' Malcolm Bradbury observed in a short story based on time he spent at Griffith, the staff 'bore the imprint of that heady, urgent and transformative season'.<sup>36</sup>

Successive vice-chancellors at the University of Queensland had struggled unsuccessfully to find a way to engage with a contemptuous state government, a demeaning endeavour that reached its nadir in 1986 when its senate decided to award Bjelke-Petersen an honorary doctorate.<sup>37</sup> Disdain for tertiary institutions was not confined to the University of Queensland, although the Queensland Institute of Technology next door to Parliament in George Street was respected as a practical, hands-on sort of place, an applied, blokey institution that produced people who did things that politicians could understand. Mike Ahern recalls being despatched by Bjelke-Petersen to investigate alarming claims that the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education was 'doing research'. He reported back that this was happening and that it was a good thing. 'They got very agitated that a member of the college council was donating money for research. They thought that this was a conflict of interest. Trying to explain why it wasn't was pretty hard.'

Griffith was largely irrelevant in the established networks of power and influence. Coaldrake was a dean at Griffith and recruited Pat Weller a senior lecturer at the Australian National University as professor of political science in 1984. Weller hired three new lecturers including his graduate student Glyn Davis, now the vice-chancellor at the University of Melbourne. This marked the beginning of a challenge to the intellectual hegemony of the government department at St Lucia, which was

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<sup>35</sup> Quirke, Noel, *Preparing for the Future, A history of Griffith University, 1971 – 1996*, Boolarong Press, Brisbane, 1996

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> Thomis, Malcolm, *A place of light and learning*, UQP, 1985

locked in fruitless debates about gerrymanders and the classical operation of the Westminster system. Weller's department became a magnet for bright academics and Commonwealth money as he and his colleagues looked for ways to apply their knowledge about public administration to the dysfunctional systems in the state. Goss, who had become leader of the opposition in March 1988, recognised a pool of talent unencumbered by the baggage of losing old debates and also began to seek their advice.

There were other disruptive influences in the complacent stability of public life. Prime among them is Tony Fitzgerald. During the 1960s Gerard Brennan, who later became Chief Justice of the High Court, took Fitzgerald under his wing as a young barrister and saw him prosper at the bar – even becoming the youngest Queen's Counsel in the state. This time is remembered as a golden age to have been at the Brisbane bar, it was dotted with larger-than-life characters, well-trained legal minds, who understood the value of keeping a low public profile in a clubby world. Fitzgerald was an eager pupil and a keen observer and had already begun to develop a theory that success came in part from the luck of being in the right place at the right time. This assignment turned him into a fatalist as he created many powerful enemies and, like Ray Whitrod and others who spoke truth to power, eventually felt compelled to leave the state. It did not take him long to realise that if his inquiry was to have an impact he needed to learn the lessons from the failure of the inquiry into prostitution and gambling at the National Hotel in the early 1960s conducted by Harry Gibbs QC. That investigation foundered under the impossible burden of securing evidence that would satisfy a jury beyond reasonable doubt – none of the men who used prostitutes were willing witnesses. Fitzgerald's request to broaden the terms of reference was accepted and after his brinkmanship of threatening to subpoena them all won unfettered access to police and cabinet records and an inquisitorial brief – his success was unprecedented. Ahern absolutely understood the consequences of his support. Gary Crooke recalls him saying, 'One thing is certain it will cost us government.'

After Jack Herbert, the bag man for the corrupt police, agreed to tell all in return for a limited indemnity from prosecution, Fitzgerald's investigations stretched further than anyone anticipated beyond the salacious allegations about the sex industry that had triggered it. It effectively became an inquiry into the modus operandi of a government. Day after day the news bulletins bristled with tales of corruption, abuse of process and painful re-enactments of cross examination by barristers who were not prepared to accept the platitudes that had passed for public debate when similar issues had been raised in the past.

Periodically during the last eighteen months of his inquiry Fitzgerald called Goss, Ahern and the Liberal leader Angus Innes to his office in George Street to sketch the trajectory of the investigation. His whiteboards were covered with linked names as the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fell into place. Fitzgerald sought their support to

preserve the integrity of the process and assurances that they would not seek to score political points. It was clear to them all that the reform that was needed was not confined to the police or the sex industry, that the systems of public administration and accountability were irretrievably broken and would need radical surgery.

For Goss this fed into the extensive policy-development process he had begun even before he became leader and well before he appointed Kevin Rudd as his private secretary in June 1988. Rudd had last worked in Queensland in 1975 in a pub in Paddington and stacking the shelves in the land of the living dead that was the old library at St Lucia, before heading south to go to the Australian National University. In 1988 he was on a recruiting drive for the Department of Foreign Affairs and back at St Lucia. On the way into the city on the number 11 bus he read the Courier-Mail and saw an ad for an interesting job, private secretary to the new Labor Party leader, Wayne Goss. Rudd had been a member of the party for seven years and this looked like an exciting challenge.<sup>38</sup> When the two men met for the first interview they talked for hours and realised they had a lot in common – they were both the sons of working-class homes who thanks to a good education and hard work, were confident that they could make an impact – this would not be just another job or an ordinary boss-worker relationship. In July Rudd moved back to Brisbane with his wife and young children. He was, Goss noted, ‘a Queenslander who resented that his state had become a national joke and welcomed the chance to do something’.<sup>39</sup> This sentiment was shared by many in the national diaspora of young Queenslanders who watched their home state with a poignant mix of exasperation and despair.

Goss did not want to fight the election campaign on the old shibboleths. It was time to develop a new forward-looking agenda that reformed moribund institutions, established more robust mechanisms for economic development, let the political pressure out of the system and took the economy seriously. In the year leading up to the 1989 election the tendrils of personal and professional friendships stretched to draw together a group determined to develop new policy. Not long after Goss was first elected to parliament Mark Plunkett who worked with him to prosecute the conspiracy case that grew out of Rosemarie Severin’s bashing, introduced Goss to his mate Wayne Swan, who was working in the office of the legendary Labor politician Mick Young.

Five years later in the middle of 1988 Swan took over as Labor Party assistant secretary after Peter Beattie announced he would step down as secretary to stand for parliament. Swan juggled this with his day job lecturing in economics at QUT. In the camaraderie of note-swapping young lecturers Swan had got to know the political scientists who had arrived at Griffith a few years earlier. Swan and Rudd, who had been a couple of years behind him at school in Nambour were already working

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<sup>38</sup> Macklin, Robert, *Kevin Rudd – the biography*, Penguin, Melbourne, 2007 p 99

<sup>39</sup> Walker, Jamie, Goss, UQP, 1995 p 111

together with Goss. After Swan introduced the Griffith academics to Rudd it was not long the small group were trading ideas and refining policy proposals. The advisers' inner circle had formed. This group set the pace for the next six years in new positions in the revitalised state bureaucracy. As they got the hang of it, they joked that the next step was Canberra. It took another eighteen years for that wish to come true and with the benefit of lessons learnt since is now being put to the test.

In August 1989 Pat Weller and Glyn Davis invited the leaders of each of the three parties to address a public-administration seminar at Griffith University. Public-sector reform is not usually a topic that draws a crowd but, with the atmosphere charged with revelations, by the time Goss arrived at the university, the lecture hall was overflowing. There was standing room only and the room bristled with television cameras and microphones. He started with a joke about the government thinking that the Westminster system was a carpet that things were swept under and then delivered a long, considered speech.

That morning Goss had presented his twenty page proposal for the reform of the public service to the shadow cabinet. He made it clear that the old ways of running the state based on 'results, not process' would not be sufficient in the future. The policy proposed reducing the number of departments, merit appointments and a more systematic approach to policy development and service delivery. It took them by surprise. 'Shit, you are really serious about all this,' he recalls Tom Burns, the deputy leader saying as he left for the university. 'One thing Digger, my portfolio isn't there...'

Labor's policy grabbed the headlines – public-sector reform was on the agenda. When Ahern spoke several weeks later, he proposed similar changes. 'It was the first time I had met a premier,' Glyn Davis recalls, 'and at first I thought he must have been drunk, he could hardly stand up, then I realised he was just completely exhausted.' Within days Ahern was no longer the leader.

It is one thing to promise reform, another to make it happen. Goss was criticised for the downbeat tone of his victory speech on December 2, 1989 in which he declared that this was the year 'the empire strikes back'. Labor had won a twenty-four-seat majority. The collapse of the regime had seemed unimaginable for so long the urge to celebrate without reserve was overwhelming. For those in the inner circle this was tempered by the enormity of the task they knew they faced, fatigue from a campaign that had run without pause for more than a year, extraordinary expectations from supporters, fury from those who had lost for the first time in thirty-two years, a continuing drought and early signs of a recession. Goss recalled, 'I was wary that people would think that the revolution could be completed by Christmas, I knew we had an enormous task and was determined we would be calm on the surface while paddling like mad underneath. I didn't want to be a hero for three years and a mug for the rest of my life I knew we could get elected on an agenda for change, but not re-elected on it, so we had to get things done quickly.'

Just how difficult became clear on Monday morning. The most state's senior public servants began work that morning by taking an unusual walk down the hill from the Executive Building at 100 George Street – which had been the Nationals' citadel since it was built in 1971 – to the opposition's room in Margaret Street. There Goss reiterated his election commitment to reduce the number of departments from twenty-seven to eighteen. In true Sir Humphrey style they told the putative premier that this would not be possible, such a change would require parliamentary approval and would have to wait until February the following year. Goss was furious, insisted on legal advice, and wrote the brief himself. It supported his understanding and when he was sworn in at the governor's gracious residence in Bardon on the following Thursday eighteen ministers posed for photos. Within a week the Special Branch police division and imperial honours had been abolished, provision was made to buy thousands of extra university places and hire thousands of new teachers.

The hand-to-hand combat with the public service had also begun. Bjelke-Petersen had liked to skite that if you looked after the public service it would look after you, and over the following years the significance of this truism became clear. The task that confronted the new administration was to bring the state up to speed with a transformation that had taken several decades elsewhere. As Queensland remained isolationist, the other states had become more sophisticated and government was no longer simply clerical. Of those in the inner circle Kevin Rudd had the most direct experience of working in government, that was only seven years in the department of foreign affairs, itself a somewhat idiosyncratic department. There was nothing glamorous about reforming the electoral system, the processes of criminal justice and administration; there was no textbook to follow.<sup>40</sup>

The reduction of ministries meant that positions and job descriptions changed, some of the most senior officials were moved to a 'reserved list', but others who had been appointed with a transparent process remained in their jobs. Those who lost status were furious and told anyone who would listen that they had been 'sent to the gulag'. A new Public Service Act was the first legislation of the Goss government. It transformed the service in many ways and required appointments based on merit. A series of reviews of departments and agencies showed that despite nepotism and the legacy of sectarian appointments, most of the public servants were not corrupt, just 'simple folk doing their jobs as well as they could' but unaccustomed to hard work, close scrutiny or high expectations.

Although the state had been a destination for interstate migration for years, particularly since the abolition of death duties in 1976, many of the most able Queenslanders had left for jobs interstate. Those working in the public sector elsewhere in Australia found that much as they might have liked to come home their

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<sup>40</sup> Stevens, Bron & Wanna, John (eds), *The Goss Government*, MacMillan, Melbourne, 1993

return was blocked, not only were positions rarely advertised, but entitlements accumulated elsewhere were not recognised. The new act changed this and many talented people flocked back like homing pigeons.

The pace of change was unrelenting and the enormity of the process provided plenty of opportunities to whinge. Change is always challenging and by Goss's second term no-one was completely happy. The government's cautious determination not to alienate old Queensland left supporters on the left feeling that social reforms were too slow, and those in rural and regional areas saw services disappearing, as a by-product of economic restructuring which was also underway. Both sides blamed the government. Goss realised the extent of the problems when he went to the Land Titles Office to get documents for a house purchase. As he looked across the counter there was a poster of Clint Eastwood with a gun pointing at him and the words, 'Just one more change, Mr Goss'.

Public opinion polls continued to rate the government highly, but the toll was rising. The hairshirt of self-discipline that Goss had chosen to don encouraged machismo in the inner circle; some enjoyed the competitive jostle for the title of the most disliked person in the state. Rudd did not resile from this, and the nickname Dr Death which was invented by National Party politicians won some currency. Rudd guarded access to Goss as chief-of-staff, and as director-general of the cabinet office from 1992 enjoyed being the tough-as-nails person who had to be wooed for the nod of policy approval. Not everyone was happy with this. One member of the inner circle communicated his displeasure by ostentatiously producing a blank book covered with a drawing of Biggles and the title, *My Life by Dr Death* at meetings. It was good humoured but the edge of competition and arrogance began to take a toll.

In this environment it was easy for gossipy old Brisbane to reassert itself. Despite the population growth in the circles that mattered everyone knew each other; many had attended the same schools, most graduated from the University of Queensland. Over dinner tables, at the beach, school functions and sporting venues the tongues began to wag. Attack by rumour and innuendo had been refined over generations in the clubby world of Brisbane. Gossip had a particular currency, creating a parallel universe in which what people 'just knew to be true' existed alongside the observable world. In part it was a product of local media that had long been captured by power. As the society became more permeable the media was more open and it became a conduit to amplify the stories, they could be reported as rumour, irrespective of their accuracy. The most sophisticated practitioners of this black art ensured that documents were tabled in court, mentioned in parliament or sent to the Crime and Misconduct Commission to give them a veneer of legitimacy and protection against defamation. Salacious, sexually-charged gossip was preferred, and those looking for social antecedents could find plenty from the earliest days of the penal colony when sexual violence was particularly rife. In more contemporary times it is probably not coincidental that the state has the highest levels of sex crime, use of pornography and teenage pregnancy.

During the 1990s both Wayne Goss and Tony Fitzgerald became the subject of ugly rumours completely without foundation, but held with passionate conviction. They were designed to undermine confidence and destroy trust and succeeded to varying degrees. After Rob Borbidge became premier in February 1996, the rumours took a different hue, but were just as virulent and destructive. As Peter Beattie's angry comments from Los Angeles in June, after salacious complaints were referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission demonstrated, it is a tactic that is resilient even in the much bigger and more open Brisbane of today.

For decades a push-me, pull-me mechanism has lured tens of thousands of people over the Queensland border. Sometimes the push out of recession or higher costs of living in the southern states was strongest, at other times the pull of the environment, cheaper housing and jobs prevailed. This provided an undoubted public relations benefit for successive premiers who could point to a graph that showed people voting with their lives to choose Queensland – and it was generally welcomed, despite jokes and sometimes bitter and politically charged quips about Mexicans coming across the border and stealing jobs. Yet the challenges were and are considerable. Drawing such large numbers of people is not necessarily self-sustaining, huge investments are required in roads, schools, hospitals, water, and accommodation to ensure that a congenial environment is not destroyed, that the mix is peppered with the right number of doctors, teachers, nurses and police.

In the lead up to the 1995 election the impact of six years of institutional change and the pressure that built, as a result of the hundreds of thousands of people had arrived, exploded. A dead koala became its talisman. The creature was repeatedly dumped in front of campaigning politicians, a token of the damage that the proposed freeway connecting the rapidly growing southern suburbs of Brisbane and the Gold Coast would do to koala habitats. It was an ambidextrous symbol, its blood-matted coat bore the weight of change fatigue and frustration, working for those who wanted things to change more – 'Don't blame me I voted Green' – and those who wanted a return to a simpler time.

Goss had warned his supporters that the election would be close, but few believed him until the votes were counted that July evening and it was clear that Labor had lost nine seats and another was too close to call. It took until early February 1996 for the drama to finally play out, and for the National party to resume the government benches with a minority government. Borbidge was an urbane politician who represented Surfers Paradise, a thoroughly modern National Party premier with a Reagan-like gift for one-liners. But his party room was filled with a Dad's Army of old stagers determined to right the wrongs of the past six years, and where possible undo the Fitzgerald and public-sector reforms and clip the wings of Tony Fitzgerald who had become head of the Court of Appeal. 'Let's get away from the idea that Tony Fitzgerald is God,' Borbidge declared as he amended legislation to limit the power of the state's second highest judge.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Koch, Tony, 'The cost of cleaning out the sunshine state', *The Australian*, May 12, 2007

The stifling heat that February was made even more unbearable for many of those who had been appointed under new merit principles to senior positions and found themselves unemployed, or ignored. The Borbidge government had scores to settle and many of the new guard of public servants were told to pack their belongings and vacate their offices. It was a scarifying process that had a personal impact on many of those in the inner circle, who have carried the lesson with them ever since. A month after Labor lost the by-election that handed government back to the Nationals the federal election was held. Labor had only two Queensland members in the House of Representatives. Eleven MPs lost their seats including Wayne Swan. Kevin Rudd and Craig Emerson both stood in what had been considered safe Labor seats, but turned out not to be. Instead they found themselves out of a job and without the parachute of their old jobs in George Street.

Pauline Hanson's election demonstrated the resilience of old Queensland, and the hurt it was feeling. There was no easy way around this. Change is dislocating and cannot be ameliorated simply by better communication. Many of those who had moved into the state in the early 1990s were themselves the victims of recession elsewhere, workers whose industrial jobs had disappeared and who had comparatively few social, community or intellectual resources to draw on.

The earnest reformers who had believed that Queensland could become a national leader, the Australian equivalent of the American Sunbelt and no longer the butt of national jokes, felt a deepening disappointment. They feared that all had been lost, that rather than testing strategies that might work for Canberra they had been playing with smoke and mirrors.

This gloom reached its nadir on September 20, 1997, the evening of Kevin Rudd's fortieth birthday party at his home in Norman Park. It was a fractious night that ended early. The excitement and sense of being at the centre of power had given way to a depressing, mundane reality. Goss had returned to the backbench and was completing an MBA, Swan and Rudd were working as consultants and Rudd had enrolled in a PhD with Weller, Davis was back at Griffith and Coaldrake had become deputy vice-chancellor at QUT. The constant conversation was fuelled by outrage about the Borbidge government's attempts to unpick the changes and revolved around what had gone wrong, what should they have done differently. The next morning they woke to news that Goss had been admitted to hospital and was undergoing surgery for a brain tumour – the soul-searching took on a new dimension amplified by human frailty.

The scene in the vast tallyroom at South Bank eleven months later illustrated just how volatile politics in Queensland had become. That chilly July evening One Nation shocked the nation when its rag-tag bag of candidates – in embarrassingly colourful clothes and even more embarrassing sound bites – won eleven seats. The election result instantly revived the notion that Queensland was different, and much more

reactionary, than the rest of the country. But One Nation's success came at the cost of the Coalition and Labor, now lead by Peter Beattie, scraped in with the support of an independent. Three months later Rudd, Swan and Emerson were also elected to the House of Representatives. The serious business of applying the lessons learnt from both the distant and recent past began.

With the election of Beattie, contracts for departmental heads appointed by Borbidge came to a close. The head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Peter Ellis found himself out of a job and a number of senior public servants were dismissed by Borbidge, and those who had left voluntarily including Glyn Davis, returned to office. Bob Marshman, the reappointed head of the employment department, called a meeting of his staff, 'As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted ...' he began.

Those who returned to senior positions in the public service were acutely aware of the challenge to find ways of entrenching the first phase of the Fitzgerald reforms and mend the old wounds that had been re-opened over the previous two years. Beattie's intuitive understanding of the way Queenslanders thought from a poor childhood in the state's north, told him it was time to demonstrate that there was a way of finding common ground – and in the process politically neutralise One Nation. Beattie reflected, 'I was criticised for making peace with Joh's supporters, but I realised that unless I set down a new way of doing things, of treating people with respect, despite our differences, we would never get off the merry-go-round of division in this state. I wanted people to realise that even if we had differences we could treat each other with civility and respect.'

The years of soul-searching paid off. Beattie and those around him who had spent dispiriting time watching the seeming unstoppable rise of One Nation, recognised the urgency of coupling bold agendas with effective communications and consultation – not just being seen to be listening, but demonstrating that they really were. Community cabinets where ministers and senior public servants met in a different town every month for a couple of days of intense discussions were both a practical manifestation of this new approach and its symbol.

There had been tension in the relationship between Goss and Beattie for years, but with Glyn Davis as the most senior public servant in the state, there was both continuity and an opportunity to refine the old settings. Davis noted: 'There was a critique that said Wayne Goss had lost touch with the people, though for most of his term his personal ratings were the envy of many premiers. Certainly he was driven about delivering the right policy, sometimes at political cost. Peter Beattie cared about good policy too, but he had the advantage of living through the demise of the Goss government.'

This was clear in the way Beattie responded to changes in the way the petrol was priced. The Queensland government had always charged less excise than New South Wales, a concession that was being abused. Tankers were driven across the border to

fill up and sell the fuel elsewhere. Davis recalls, 'Treasury did the sums and said that if government ended the fuel subsidy but knocked a hundred bucks off the price of registration or licenses, the benefit would remain the same. Peter Beattie announced the policy but no-one believed they would not miss out. People didn't trust government any more, and talkback went berserk. The next morning I went to see the Premier and said that although I thought the shift from excise to reduced registration was still the right policy, it wasn't going to fly. Did he want me to draft a statement for the government backing away from it? His response was immediate - "No don't do that". I was surprised, but he explained, "I am going to spend the next few days travelling around the state, listening to all these complaints. Only when I get back will we reverse the policy - you work on getting the paper work done." Treasury's idea was the right policy, but the Premier was right. It gave people a chance to vent their anger, and for him to say sorry and then act.'

Under Beattie the big lesson was that even with the numbers, government was a permanent campaign and effective government needed to blend the practical and the symbolic.

**C**lose observers in Queensland had realised long before the rest of the country that the appeal of One Nation grew out of the economic uncertainty that many people were feeling. In the absence of satisfactory explanations this found voice in racist, reactionary outbursts. Queenslanders liked to believe that the economy was doing well, but for many years despite the best efforts of senior Treasury bureaucrats including Sid Schubert and Leo Hilscher during the Bjelke-Petersen years, it had been underperforming. The legacy of corruption, a lack of diversification and recession took a toll by the mid-1990s. The legacy of decades of underinvestment in education and social services, while urging people to celebrate a carefree lifestyle, was still being reaped. Yet the state's economy had changed dramatically. Japanese investment had dried up in the mid-1980s and the local business establishment had been weakened by national takeovers. The rural industries that had been the state's backbone had been transformed by national competition policy. The associated food manufacturing businesses once owned by local families had been hoovered up by bigger conglomerates - the yeasty smell of hops fermenting still bubbled over the city from the brewery in Milton but it was no longer offset by the aromas of biscuits cooking or milk separating.

Although large numbers of people continued to arrive in the state, many were refugees from other changing economies and could only find work servicing the growth, building each other's houses, taking in the washing. Many of the professionals who had been lured back to the state found that their careers stalled several rungs below what they could achieve elsewhere and became interstate commuters, travelling to Sydney and Melbourne and Canberra for much of the week, while the family remained in Brisbane.

It was clear that the challenge that had once been administrative and structural was essentially economic. Although the reforms of public administration and the police recommended by Fitzgerald gobbled the headlines – much of the real cost of the corrupt years was in terms of squandered or unrecognised economic opportunities. Population growth, supplemented by tourism and property development, masked the scale of the underlying problem. Page after page in the Fitzgerald report documented commercial decisions made on a grace and favour basis by government ministers who had an eye to the main chance, but with little strategic vision despite the best efforts of the state's Treasury. The cost was both financial and social as long as economic development seemed to be in the hands of the blokes in white shoes and their mates. This was not a robust business model for the third-largest state.

The first tentative steps towards the new resources boom had begun during the 1990s as proposals for new mines were approved with lucrative royalty agreements for the state, but Brisbane was still a branch office. At the first Labor Party conference in 1998 in Bundaberg twenty-three tickets were sold to business observers. John Mattick who had been running the Institute for Molecular Bioscience at the University of Queensland for a decade decided to shell out the \$1200 and go along. The university had a patchy record in winning government support for research programs, but Mattick has a big vision for the state as a hub of the emerging global biotechnology industry. 'As I lined up with the blokes from the peanuts growers association and the motor traders I wondered if I was in the right place, whether I had done my dough, but it seemed worth a punt. I was convinced that this was an industry that was about to take off and we had a chance to be in on the ground floor.' The following week Mattick was invited to talk to the Premier and cabinet about his vision. 'I pointed out that the previous year the total value of Australia's grain exports was \$7 billion, but that the total value of the recombinant pharmaceutical industry was \$9 billion dollars – and all the drugs could fit in two jumbo jets. The industry was at an early state and we had the beginnings of a world-class research facility, all we needed was the support of the government.'

Beattie listened carefully and had what he describes as a 'eureka moment'. With a showman's audacious magic he decided that this was where the future lay, combining the state's natural resources with intellectual capital, funnelling money into research and development. He came up with a new tag to replace the twenty-one year old Sunshine State, but most thought his suggestion, Smart State, was an oxymoron.

Over the next decade hundreds of millions of dollars were poured into research and the state has become a national leader in biotechnology, medical, electronic, mining and transport research. A new partnership has evolved with the universities which are no longer mentally tucked away in the elbows of the river, or bushland – but have their names emblazoned on the city's skyline. For Mike Ahern this is poetic justice. He recalls the first time he visited the Queensland Institute of Medical Research and was convinced by the arguments that it was possible to do something different in the state.

As treasurer in 1988 he introduced a state tax on tobacco for the first time, and channelled the funds directly to the institute. 'It is the way we have to go, and it is already working – we have to use our brains, not just our brawn or the stuff that is sitting in the ground. I was in parliament when the first tonne of coal was exported, now we are exporting more than 450,000 tonnes a day, and the whole state is changing.'

This is reflected in the profile of the new arrivals from interstate and around the world – most are young and highly educated, and regard the weather as a bonus, not an excuse to stop thinking. As my co-editor at *Semper*, Jane Camens says, 'For years I was ashamed to say I was from Queensland, now I am proud that I do.'

A few nights before I left Brisbane in early 1978, for a job with the *Australian Financial Review* in Melbourne, I had dinner with Wayne Goss in one of the city's three French restaurants. It had been a tough year, many hundreds of people had been arrested in one street march after another in an expensive, time-consuming charade designed to show who was boss. I was demoralised, sick of feeling that everything I did was watched. The editor of my paper would call me into his office most weeks and remind me that he and 'the advertisers' were watching and if he heard I had been in a march I would be sacked. 'It would put us in an impossible situation,' he threatened. After my car was pulled over by police for yet another pointless check, a relative in the force suggested it would be wise to leave the state if I had a job offer elsewhere. I could not imagine that the place could ever change. I was ready to move on.

Wayne was more optimistic. He enjoyed pushing the limits of what could be done with the law – developing self-defence handbooks so that the hundreds of people who were being arrested to fight their own cases in the courts, providing legal aid, battling Aboriginal injustice. If you felt you could make a difference it was an exhilarating time of extraordinary highs and lows, with tremendous camaraderie and the occasional bitter falling out. For newly minted professionals, mobility was not easy at a time when registration was controlled by state-based cartels. The longer you stayed the harder it was to leave. But many of us left and, like refugees everywhere, bored our new friends with tales of the place we had left behind where change seemed so impossible, a reactionary backwater. After a few years most of us decided it was best to let it recede. Yet the intensity of the physical environment – the heat, the hills, the trees, and the sun – found its parallels in the political extremes and the intense social milieu and was hard to dislodge. As David Malouf said of another era, 'there was an amazing underlife'.<sup>42</sup>

The relentlessly overheating pressure cooker that was Queensland in the 1970s and '80s eventually exploded. There was nothing inevitable about it. In other societies it could have degenerated into a full-blown police state, or collapsed into chaos. It is

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<sup>42</sup> Evans, Raymond & Ferrier, Carole (eds), *Radical Brisbane – an unruly history*, Vulgar Press, West End, 2004; Evans, Raymond, *A History of Queensland*, Cambridge, P 194

easy to say that things like that couldn't happen here, but for the decency of a few men in positions of power who were shocked by the hypocrisy when it stared back at them from the television screen, and the courage of others who, at considerable cost in their own lives, took the hard road of speaking truth to power that Queensland could still be a pariah state today.

The lessons learned during those years – about the importance of civil rights and political institutions, about the way to imagine, make and effect change, the extraordinary importance of education, the power of the media, the capacity of public opinion to shift and the importance of treating people decently despite political differences – have had an impact on a generation of people who are now moving into the prime of their lives. Everyone applies the lessons in different ways, depending on the circumstances they find themselves in. But the echoes of these experiences were there when Anna Bligh drove the complicated policy of adding an extra year of schooling to bring Queensland into line with the other states; when Stephen Keim risked his career to fight for proper processes during the political prosecution of Dr Mohamed Haneef, when Margaret McMurdo president of the Queensland Court of Appeal challenged the shadow attorney-general for abusing parliamentary processes to prevent changes to superannuation laws that would benefit Justice Michael Kirby and his partner; when David Solomon recommended the state adopt an open information policy<sup>43</sup>; when Chris Mitchell uses the pages of *The Australian* to campaign for decent treatment of Indigenous people; when Don Henry finds creative new ways of advancing the climate change debate and building links between business and the conservation movement; when Glyn Davis invited captains of industry, farmers, school students and movie stars as well as professors to 2020; when Kevin Rudd issued the long awaited apology to the Stolen Generations, urged senior public servants to work harder, but did not sack departmental heads when he became Prime Minister; and every time an immaculately groomed and glamorous Quentin Bryce appears in public and talks about human rights.

Looking back on those times Wayne Goss identifies the points at which the pressure increased; Peter Beattie sees a grain of sand that so irritated the oyster that it produced a pearl. Both men had the remarkable experience of learning that profound change, against seemingly impossible odds, is not just a dream, but it can happen. They and the group of people around them, including Kevin Rudd, Wayne Swan, Anna Bligh, Glyn Davis, Peter Coaldrake, Margaret Gardner, Pat Weller and others, drew on increasing social unease and became instrumental in the end of two apparently unassailable regimes - those of Joh Bjelke-Petersen and his one time nemesis, John Howard.

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<sup>43</sup> Solomon, David, Webbe Simone & McGann, Dominic, *The Right to Information*, Report by the FOI Independent Review Panel, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Brisbane, June 2008

Goss considers now that 'it was old men trying to stifle the young', but concedes there was more at stake than that. The old men and their acolytes fought to the bitter end. Gary Crooke now Queensland's Integrity Commissioner is still deeply depressed by the insights he gleaned into the ease with which credible people could pervert the system, wonders whether human nature is beyond change. On a good day he is cautiously optimistic. Tony Fitzgerald left the bar immediately after his Inquiry reported and left the state a decade later and now works as a legal mediator in Sydney, but the burden of being the man who sunk the dagger deep into the heart of the *ancien régime* weighs heavily at times.

Glyn Davis reflects that it was just one of those accidents of fate, of being in the right place at the right time. When any old regime collapses much younger people get chances that would normally be unimaginable, but this group has not wasted a moment in taking their chances and learning from their missteps. The ultimate test will be whether they can maintain such fleetness of foot while also delivering for those like them who they spent their childhoods in disadvantaged Queensland homes.

There is not much of the old Brisbane left – what was once a shambling, overgrown country town has become just another air-conditioned city where once weatherboard Queenslanders strained for the afternoon breeze. In a blink, Google gives me the phone numbers and addresses of at least twenty French restaurants, which readers' surveys assure me are worth eating in. Sure the city streets named for the kings and queens of the House of Hanover still run on the same grid in the elbow of the river – girls across, boys up – but the Executive Building perched atop the hill on the highest point of George Street is no longer the tallest building or the epicentre of power. That has dispersed and is now shared in a more transparent way with those in the corporate high rises on Riverside, the universities and a citizenry that has high expectations and is not so easily cowered.

There is, of course, a gulf between opposing something that is old and broken and articulating a vision of what is possible, to paraphrase George Orwell, to do more than give the appearance of solidity to pure wind. Although as this group knows better than most, 'all issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia.'<sup>44</sup> Or as Kevin Rudd said in his maiden speech, 'Politics is about power. It is about the power of the state. It is about the power of the state as applied to individuals, the society in which they live and the economy in which they work. Most critically, our responsibility in this parliament is how that power is used: whether it is used for the benefit of the few or the many.'<sup>45</sup>

For those of us blessed by the curse of spending our youths in particularly interesting times, the past is not a foreign country, but the source of psychological

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<sup>44</sup> Orwell, George 'Politics and the English Language', *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1950

<sup>45</sup> Macklin, Robert, *Kevin Rudd – the biography*, Penguin, Melbourne, 2007

strength and scars. Australia's new political leaders are a product of a time and place that was uniquely volatile. This would be of no consequence except that this group of Queenslanders is now at the epicentre of national power. Understanding their motivations and where they come from as a group is significant. Now the rehearsal is over, the main game has begun and I see the legacy of a youth spent in turbulent times in their courage and their caution, in their desire for change and their fear of alienating powerful enemies, in their arrogance and their humility, their harshness and their humour and in their heartfelt desire to make a difference.<sup>46</sup> ■

#### Notes:

This essay draws on my own experience from living in Queensland, off and on, since the early 1970s. I have thought about this a lot over the years, but for the purposes of this essay my observations were refined and developed in interviews with many of the main participants who are named in it. I am grateful for the frankness of these conversations. In some instances when I heard competing views of the same events from multiple participants, and I have synthesised these recollections in a way which accords with the various perspectives.

A wide range of other sources were also consulted, direct quotes from these sources are acknowledged in the footnotes that follow.

Like everyone who writes about Queensland I am indebted to the staff of the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland and their diligence and willingness to retrieve records from the vast archival collection in that library. Penelope Whiteway was particularly helpful in tracking down the back issues of *Semper*, as my copies were destroyed in a house fire shortly after I left Brisbane in 1978.

While I am grateful to the assistance provided by so many people – including especially the Griffith REVIEW team – the conclusions and interpretations are mine alone.

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